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AH MOY
THE STORY OF A CHINESE GIRL



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THE STORY OF A CHINESE GIRL

BY

LU WHEAT

Illustrated by Mary E. Curran



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By LU WHEAT

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TO MR. WU TING FANG
AND TO MR. HERBERT GILES,
PROFESSOR OF CHINESE IN CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND
THE AUTHOR IS GRATEFUL
FOR KINDLY ASSISTANCE.

FOREWORD

The author of this little book does not hope to convey to the western mind any very accurate idea of the real china-man,—nor of the Eurasian or half-breed, who comes upon the stage wherever the white man sets his foot or pitches his tent; but if the reader shall gather from its pages even a little of the wisdom of the far East, it will be recompense for weary days and long sea voyages.

AH MOY
THE STORY OF A CHINESE GIRL



“The path leading up the hill was dotted with Chinamen.”



AH MOY

The Story of a Chinese Girl

I

THE province of Honan, in the north of China, is noted for its great Tien Dong temple — a beautiful structure, situated in a mountain fastness which has been made sacred by the worship of ages. Hundreds of feet above the fertile plains which stretch — rice-laden and flower-laden — in every direction, the noble structure stands, a monument to the Buddhism that was, rather than to that which is.

On a pleasant day in the spring of 1880, the path leading up the mountain side was dotted with Chinamen, who were making a pilgrimage to the sacred edifice. The throng, which was composed of all sorts and conditions of men, was tolerant, and anyone desiring to do so might join it without fear of molestation. Ancestor worshippers, Confucianists and Buddhists, tramped side by side in friendly conversation, while here and there a foreigner told his beads, or led his half-breed son in search of the Holy Grail. To the hard-working coolie the trip was regarded as the joy of his life. He looked upon the sunshine and the shade, and breathed the perfume of the flowers, with a feeling that life could never settle back into the same humdrum existence that it had been. To the rich, whose heavy silk garments brushed close to poverty and rags, the

infinite blue of the sky, the great distances as they came into view, and the noble, old forest trees brought divine inspiration. From many lips came the mutter of prayer, or the set phrase: "The dew is on the lotus." Although the path was long and steep, it was not a hard one to climb, for the priests had arranged easy as well as graceful windings and had filled in the nooks and corners with flowers, knowing full well that he who drinks in the beauties of nature is impervious to fatigue.

For ages uncounted there had been no destruction of life upon the mountain, whether of bird or of beast, of insect or of reptile. This scrupulous regard for the rights of animals had so penetrated the minds of the priests that nothing showed signs of fear. Birds discharged their battery of song, rainbow-tinted lizards darted from bush to bush, and rabbits hopped along the path, scarce yielding the right of way to their human brothers. Even the wily serpent went lazily to his crevice in the rocks, under the all-pervading security of the right to life. To the left of the path, a lotus bed had been hewn into the solid rock, where frogs might "reverently repeat their poem" and reptiles live out their allotted span.

Much etiquette toward one another was observed by the pilgrims, and much pleasant discourse was exchanged, until they came within sound of the chanting priests, then all walked with downcast eyes and palms pressed closely together.

The buildings, with their eight hundred idols, occupied about seven acres of ground,—the vacant spaces being economically arranged with reference to the food-supply of the priests. Gardens containing vegetables, mushroom beds, and bamboo sprouts were plentiful, while thousands of lily bulbs grew luxuriously or were drying, preparatory to being stored for the winter.

Ranged in long rows were idols, some with wide, glaring eyes, to signify that man by nature is fierce and angry; others expressing the calm repose of such as have entered upon the noble eight-fold path.

As the pilgrims reached the grounds, they separated into groups, each of which sought out and paid reverent devotion to their favorite saint. Those who were potters bowed before a green porcelain god, while the farmers gathered before a harvest queen. The literati stood, in attitudes signifying devotion, before a female deity, who represented learning; while above all an immense bronze Buddha told by the expression in its face the story of calm repose that comes only to such as have overcome the selfish desires of earth. At the right of the path, almost hidden by foliage, was a stone image of Hirati,* an idol with the face of a comely woman. Against her breast she held a naked babe, and in her left hand was a full-blown lily.

Before this idol the smoke of incense wafted lazily; while a Chinaman breathed out to the powers above him the burden of a prayer — a prayer beseeching the Goddess on behalf of a child as yet unborn; beseeching Her to use Her good offices so that, in the fulness of time, he might have a son. Daughters he had, but they were in no wise to be considered as representatives of his ancient line,—since they were destined by providence to be keepers of other men's homes and the mothers of other men's

* This figure, so like the Blessed Mother in our own religious art is pre-Christian by many centuries. It is symbolic of evolution, carried further than the boldest scientist of the west would dare to go. It tells us that, for sins committed in a previous incarnation, Hirati was born a demon, with such wicked impulses that she devoured her own offspring; but that, under the beneficent teaching of the gentle Buddha, all her sins were transmuted into goodness, after which she was given power over the sex of the unborn. Hence there is an ever-increasing throng of young people before her, asking that they may be blessed with sons.

children. Twice in the years gone by had he laid his choicest incense before Hirati and beat his breasts in prayer, but when the child came it was only a girl, and he was even now considering the ways and means by which a weak spot in the family line might be bridged over. Full well he knew that the civil code of China made provision for such contingencies, but he regarded all its remedies as trenching on failure; therefore he had determined to give the gods another chance to answer his prayer by sending him a son.

So wrapped was he in his thoughts that he lingered long before the idol, oblivious of the fact that others were waiting to offer their devotions. But, suddenly, at the sound of approaching footsteps, he laid one more wafer upon the burner and passed, with solemn dignity, into a shaded path. He had gone but a few steps when he heard a familiar voice calling him:

“Whither away, most honored brother? the day and the hour are propitious. Shall we not sip together? I would have converse with thee; there are many things that I would say.”

Ching Fo turned and, seeing an old friend, bowed very low and said:—

“Some spirit hath brought us together, Sing Lee; I saw thee in my sleep last night. Hath the gods been good to thee, and are thy honorable parents well?”

“Well; and able to climb the path and pay their devotions to their patron saint,” replied Sing Lee.

“Thou art in good hap to have them with thee to this ripe old age. Thou art a favorite of the gods, Sing Lee, for thou hast both parents and sons,—parents to lean upon thee in their old age, and sons to continue the family worship when thou art gone.”

“Yes, yes; the old man in the sky has been good to

me and he will also be good to thee. The astrologers predict a bountiful harvest this year, and the birth of many male children. Thy day will come! The sky is full of promise. Let us have tea and sweets, and forget the anxiety of the hour. Here is a good young priest who will serve us."

So saying, the two men stepped inside the temple and sat down before a lacquered table. The young priest responded to Sing Lee's two raised fingers with two cups of tea and two plates of preserved ginger. In front of Ching Fo he also placed that great symbol of fecundity and strength, a piece of dried fish, ceremoniously wrapped in many folds of red paper. This delicate reminder that the priest held in remembrance his desire for a son made Ching Fo's heart leap with joy. He slipped the tiny package into his sleeve with the reverent air of a man who touches sacred things; then for some moments he cast his eye downward, deep in thought. After the silence, he turned to Sing Lee and they entered into such conversation as men engage in who live and move in the same social grade. Its substance was gossip, politics, and poetry with here and there the spice of wit; but there was a subject, dear to the heart of both men, which they did not mention. This was the betrothal of one of Sing Lee's sons to a daughter of Ching Fo. It had long been a foregone conclusion that the families should intermarry; but, as so far, Ching Fo's wife had produced only females, Sing Lee feared lest the plague of girls should continue. He had learned from close observation that women who bear no sons are liable to transmit this misfortune to the second generation; and he dared not think what it would mean to his own family should there come into it an element to endanger the succession. Under these circumstances, he felt reluctant about discussing so serious a mat-

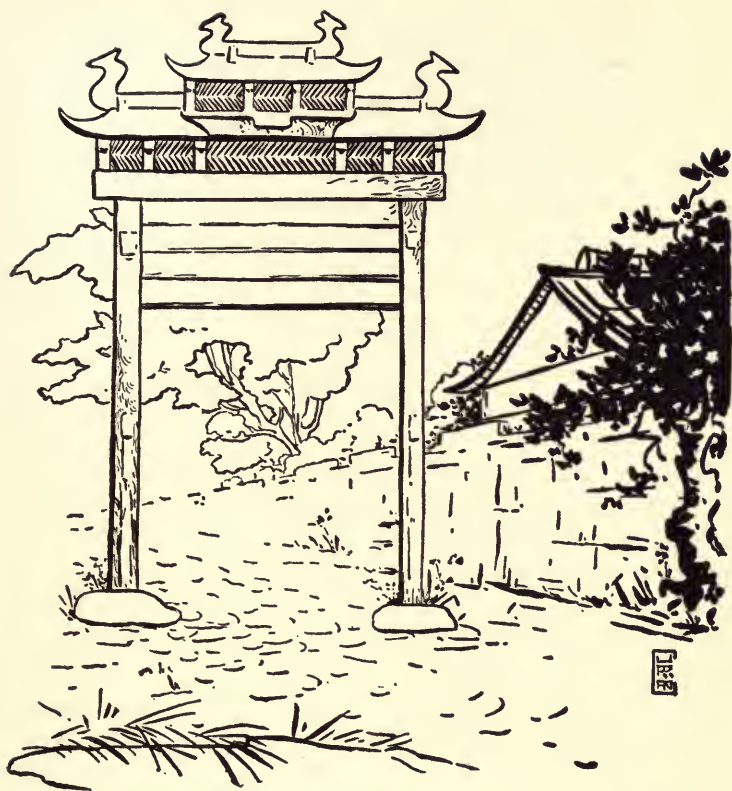
ter as the betrothal until he saw a little further into his friend's prospects; so the two sipped their tea and ate their ginger, leaving this most important topic for some other time. Ching Fo felt the slight of his friend and arose to go, bidding him a more or less restrained good-by. But he had taken only a few steps when Sing Lee called him, and, with much warmth, said:

"May the gods bring it to pass as thou desirest!"

"I thank thee," replied Ching Fo, "for this expression of sympathy, and I earnestly hope that the day is near when I shall be blessed with a son; for I know full well that nothing is so unfilial as to die and leave no posterity.* My pretty wife is the most unhappy of women because she, as yet, has borne me only daughters. But now the sign of the zodiac is in Taurus, and I hope, before another moon, my luck will have changed. Good-by, honored brother. Ask the genii of thine own family to intercede for me."

Thus saying, Ching Fo turned into a path that led directly down the hill to a bungalow of more than ordinary pretentiousness. A beautiful arch of honor stood across the way, the stone pavement, beneath which was worn into hollows by the footsteps of generations long since dead. Opposite the arch, carved in the solid rock of the mountain side, were sculptured divinities, presiding over a basin which was used for the ceremonious washing of hands. Over a high stone wall rose the heavily timbered roof of a house, which was guarded by a wooden gate, fastened so securely with iron bars that not even Ching Fo could enter until his poundings on the gong had attracted the attention of some one within. Once, twice, thrice, the sound echoed against the stone divinities before a servant unbarred and, with a low salaam, admitted the master.

* Daughters are not counted as posterity in China.



The Arch of Honor

Gray with the grayness of ancient things, and weather-beaten by the storms of a thousand years, was this home so hidden in a mountain nook. On the south side lay a little ground, where nested birds and bees and spiders,—for no attempt at formal gardening had ever desecrated the place. Everything indicated that the owner was a man upon whom the gods had bestowed a goodly share of the things that perish. Acres and acres of waving rice-fields came into view, as the little elevation on which the house stood was reached and terraces of vegetables grew far up the steep hillsides. Nothing, however, spoke of modern conveniences. The doors groaned on their wooden hinges; insects crept through the open space between the eaves and the walls and the Chinese rat, more famous and more troublesome than any other rat, lived and squeaked between the ceiling and the roof. Even snakes occasionally thrust their forked tongues through the holes in the wall. Other things, besides rats and snakes, had a pre-emption claim upon certain portions of the house,—creeping things of uncanny look; but Ching Fo regarded them all as part and parcel of the place, for the house was very old. Ching Fo said that he had lived in it a thousand years, by which he meant that the family shrine, so stiff and fly-specked, had been maintained there a thousand years, and he reckoned his own age, not as an individual, but as the representative of a family which must be considered in its entirety, rather than in separate parts. To honor this long line of ancestors, and to see to it that a successor was duly provided, was Ching Fo's mission in life, and subjects remote from this great one did not enter very fully into his calculations.

He believed in ghosts, for there were many shadowy resurrections at his own hearth-stone,—resurrections of ancestors, who were ever counseling him to honor their

memory and observe their customs. For ages before him, his forefathers had practiced the rigid virtue that makes possible a clear vision of spiritual things; hence, no secret passion had scattered uncleanness through his body or filled his brain with the disease of sensuality. Economy and industry had brought to him the comforts that go to make life pleasant in a Chinese home, and it was reckoned in the neighborhood that he was a fortunate man. The one dark cloud that hung across his pathway, and left its shadow over all his days, was, that, despite the costly incense burned before the goddess Hirati, and despite the soft, sweet prayers of his wife, she had brought him only daughters.

As Ching Fo entered the front door where the little lamp was burning in honor of his ancestors, he felt it beating in upon him that he was under the displeasure of some evil spirit. He lighted an incense stick, carefully leaving the ashes of preceding ones piled high in the bowl, removed the shoes from his white stockinged feet, and took from the shelf a copy of the Chinese Family Code. Nervously he turned to the page which provides for the maintenance of family worship in case no sons are born, then closed the book and pondered with dejected brow.

"Slave girls, if they bear male children, may be the instruments with which to bridge over a weak spot in the family line. Nephews may be adopted, or daughters betrothed to the sons of friends and the affianced may be adopted," he quoted.

"But all these," he said to himself, "are courts of last resort, to which we go only when all else fails. The most feasible way in case I have another daughter, will be to take a second wife. Peace may be kept in the family — or it may not — even if not, 'twere better than to die and leave no posterity."

As he soliloquized over the case, he thought of the astrologer, Ah Sin, who lived in a hut only a mile away, and decided to pay him a visit. Some definite information might be gotten there, and no stone should be left unturned in such a serious matter. In a silent and pre-occupied manner he passed out through the gate and into the open road, thence across a strip of stony ground and through a gap in the cliff, from which he emerged upon a vast level of rice-fields, where green waves followed each other all day, like the tides of an inland sea. The sight was so beautiful that it intoxicated him, and in a sort of enchantment he heard, in imagination, the cry of a newborn babe. Startled and thrilled by the sound, he hastened forward to the astrologer.

"What mystery hangs over me to-day," he said. "I come to consult thee concerning an heir to the shrine of my fathers, and, lo, I hear a voice like the wail of an infant wafted across the fields. Tell me, good prophet, are the gods angry, or are they propitious? Canst thou answer, wise man? Two daughters have I, but, alas, no son. Canst tell me what the signs are?"

The astrologer turned over his charts and made calculations among the stars before he answered and then very measuredly said:

"The crab is not in conjunction with the sun, but the vernal equinox is at hand, and Aries is a masculine sign. May the lucky stars auspiciously unite!"

This was somewhat less than Ching Fo had hoped, but he hastened homeward with the feeling still strong in his heart that good news awaited him there. As he retraced his steps over the mountain path, the mystic sound still thrilled him and filled him with the hope that he had heard a voice — and that it was the voice of a son.

But his expectations were blighted when a servant met

him at the door, and, bowing very low, informed him that a new born female child awaited his acknowledgment. Dark shadows flung themselves into his coal black eyes as, for a moment, he was staggered by the blow.

"Can it be," he said bitterly, "that some angry god is turning all my sons to girls? Oh, gentle goddess, to whom I have so often burned my choicest incense, where art thou? and why hast thou forsaken me?"

A wail from the infant brought him to the consciousness that he must decide whether he should accept this latest born daughter, or whether he should command the servants to expose her. Being a good Buddhist, he had always observed the rule of the brotherhood, forbidding the destruction of life, except under circumstances most imperative; so he decided that this girl must be provided for. He reasoned, logically, that the power given to fathers by the Romans, by the Gauls, and by his own countrymen, over the lives of female children came into direct conflict with the laws of Buddha, and he felt bound by the latter.

"There is no help for it," he said aloud, "I must accept this third female child."

Thus deciding, he put his feet into a pair of embroidered shoes, tossed back the long queue which had been coiled around his head, and went to the bedside of his wife. As he beheld the infant, the cold legal aspect of the case passed out of his mind and a look of inexpressible tenderness crept over his face. For a moment he bent his eye upon the babe, then, taking her almost reverently into his arms, he raised her three times towards the ceiling, thus admitting that she was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. When he had pressed her to his bosom for one brief moment, he handed her to a nurse and retired. No word was spoken by either husband or wife, but a tear bedewed the mother's eye as she turned her face to the wall.

The formal acknowledgment of the child having taken place, it was dressed and laid beside its mother, who feebly raised her arms to receive the little stranger, although uttering a moan at the thought of having again given birth to a female child. Sadly she remembered the incense she had burned and the prayers she had said; sadly she sighed for a son to make her seem more beautiful in the sight of her husband.



II

THE unconscious cause of all this trouble stretched her toes, and blinked her eyes, and grew, just like any other well-cared-for baby. When she was a month old, a fine party was given in her honor. Relatives came from far and near, bringing fruit and flowers. One of her cousins brought a large durion with such a strong odor that it made her sneeze, at which her mother put a wadded



blouse over her, for fear she was taking cold. At noon they shaved her head, leaving only a little tuft of hair on the right side, to show that she was not betrothed, and they named her Ah Moy, which being interpreted, means "a female child." To this name, however, they prefixed the number three that she might be distinguished from her two sisters, whose names were also Ah Moy. Soon after she was named, a priest came on pony-back adown the hill and brought her a charm, enclosed in many folds of red paper. This the little mother thought to be a great honor,

for it was seldom that a priest took the trouble to bless a girl baby.

"We will hang the precious token over the bed, to keep evil-spirits away," said Ching Fo, and with hammer and nail he fastened the good luck symbol over the cradle where slept his third daughter, in blissful unconsciousness of spirits either good or bad.

Poor little Ah Moy! It was travesty to give her the symbol, for it represented the great Chinese monad, called Ying and Yang, used far back in the darkness of forgotten time to represent the equality of the sexes. But the priests had forgotten — and during the thousand years that Ching Fo had lived in the bungalow, no inquiry had been made as to its significance.*

For the next two months the third daughter lay very quietly in her bamboo cradle. Sometimes her mother called her "the blessed one," because she was so very good, but Ching Fo objected to this, for he thought it an innovation on the usages of their ancestors, who never gave names to their female children. "It is not proper," he said, "that we should break away from the customs of our forefathers."

When her clothes were removed, her feet sometimes flew up and she saw her pretty little toes, but she kept the calm exterior of a Chinese baby until one day when a cockroach came tramping over her bed. Then she laughed.† This

* The adoption by the Northern Pacific R. R. Company of the Ying and Yang as a trademark has made us familiar with one of the great symbols of the Far East. It is found on gravestones, dating back thousands of years before Christ, and is present in every climate from Yezo, in the north of Japan, to the soft, semi-tropics of India. It is also found in the basketry of our own North American Indians, and cut on the stone discs of the Mound Builders of Tennessee. It has many meanings, but in China is understood to stand for the male and female principles, light and darkness, or positive and negative forces.

† The Sisters of Charity in China declare that many girl babies never laugh.

so pleased her mother that she left her weaving and whispered a soft prayer into the little brown ear of her child. A prayer to the same goddess, Hirati, beseeching her to intercede for Ah Moy that she might some day become the mother of sons — for she was now betrothed to Ting Ho, the sturdy three-year-old son of Sing Lee. Soon after this, she was old enough to have her pretty little fingers whipped; for a Chinese baby must not lay its hand upon anything that is not given it. Even the long pipe that her father smoked so temptingly near, as he carried her in his arms, was forbidden to be investigated by the slightest touch.

After a few more weeks she was taken out into the open court and laid upon a heavy bed-quilt, where she could see her sisters play and hear them chant the pretty hymns that the priest had given them to learn. The great out of doors, with its sky, and the glory of color around her was to Ah Moy an everchanging wonderland. From the emerald depths of a bamboo tree that had thrown one slender arm across the wall, she heard the soft, far-away tinkle of the bell insect, so dear to painters and poets.* Her father was very fond of the small musicians which swarmed in summer, and Ah Moy's ear was trained to insect music by ages of nature-loving ancestors. She also heard the frogs in her father's rice-fields repeating their poem and was lulled to sleep by the droning of the bees and the sighing of the pines.

Ching Fo was fond of his three daughters and joined in their play with youthful simplicity. He caught for them fireflies and grasshoppers, which he imprisoned in the tiniest of bamboo cages; he hung boughs of green upon the walls to attract the butterflies, and Ah Moy soon grew

* Old Chinese poets refer to the bell insect with great affection, because it makes a noise that reminds them of home.

to anticipate with pleasure her winged visitors. It was a great event in the lives of the three little girls when, one day, their mother placed in the court a box containing five soft, fluffy little chickens. One wing of each little chick was dyed purple, so that they might be distinguished from Ah Fat's chickens, which had a red spot on each head. Every day the chickens were turned out into the street for exercise, but always those with the purple wings found their way back to the court; while Ah Fat's chickens with the red heads as surely went into his gate. The little girls played with their new pets, divided their rice with them, and, sometimes, longed to follow them into the street; but the inexorable custom of China, which gives girls no privileges outside their own gates, was rigidly enforced.

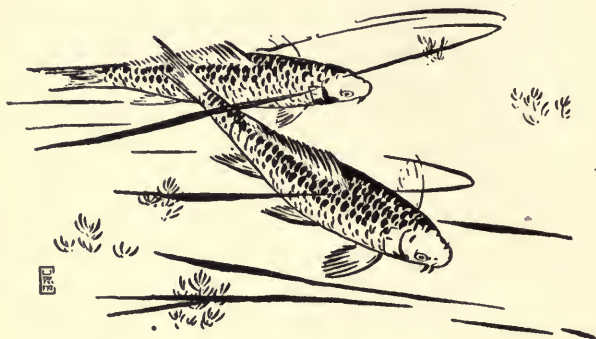
Once, when the gate had been left ajar, Ah Moy, number one, ventured out into the path, but she received such a cruel blow on her legs that she never repeated the disobedience; and that night her nurse told a frightful story about the "cave of the infant ghosts," and how a great dragon watches for disobedient little girls, and, to catch them, and carry them off to a place where they must build sand towers which are ever swept away by the wind, and which the tired little hands must hasten to rebuild, lest the dragon come and punish them for idleness. This story so impressed Ah Moy number one that she dreamed when she went to sleep that the dragon came and fastened his claws deep in her leg where the bamboo whip had left its mark.

Thus the days of childhood slipped into enchanted years, and the three daughters of Ching Fo lived in blissful unconsciousness that they were regarded by their parents as evidence of an angry god. For them, as for other children, there were days of joy and days of sorrow; but for them, more than for other children, the birds sang, the bees droned, and nature poured out her bounteous store



"He carried her many a day upon his arm."

of bloom. The heart of Ching Fo was warm and loving; the little mother was a model of devotion, and life went on from year to year in a home where but little gloom fell through the sunshine. Especially was the love of Ching Fo for Ah Moy, number three, commented upon by the people in the neighborhood, as he carried her on his arm to see the trees and the great gray boulders that projected from the mountain side, or as he showed her the bloom on many a wayside flower.



III

IN the fourth spring of Ah Moy's life an event occurred which re-shaped all the doings of the bungalow. One beautiful April day there was added to the family another babe — a babe appointed by the gods to continue the family worship — a long-looked-for, a patiently waited for, a much beloved son.

Ching Fo felt now the blessed assurance that for him the little lamp on the household shrine would continue to burn as it had done for his fathers. He felt that for him, as for them, the filial love of his son would ensure a tablet to his memory, and that the smoke of incense would curl in misty circles over his unforgotten name. He saw, in softest fancy, the children of his children's children keeping the home life forever free from the encroachment of new ideas.

With his three daughters, he continued to hold happy and loving intercourse; but as they were only females, he regarded them as luxuries rather than as successors to his ancestral line. Beautiful and obedient they were, and now that he had a son, he felt it good to have them, for they vied with him in celebrating the advent of the man child and helped to make his home the happiest in the land.

The news that a son had been born to his honorable line soon spread to all the country round about, for the proud father immediately had set before his house the tallest bamboo pole that could be found, and, from its top, he floated that great symbol of fecundity and strength, a paper carp. Large of belly, red of gill and gaping of mouth, it

floated and thus told the happy story. Many a time had Ching Fo seen his neighbors raise the carp to proclaim the birth of a son, and three times had he prepared the pole for himself, to lay it sorrowfully away, because the God of Fate had sent him only a daughter. On such occasions, the wise ones predicted that Ching Fo was under the displeasure of the gods, and that his family line would perish from the earth; but now the noble symbol was flaunting a defiance to all their sneers and he was full of joy.

The son was strong and healthy, and, like most Chinese babies, a non-cryer. The poor little-foot mother was hardly able to be about before relatives began to come from far and near to pay their respects and to bring gifts, which proved a most excellent investment, from a business point of view, for Ching Fo acknowledged the honor paid his son by returning manifold.

The older daughters looked on with wonder at the importance attributed to the advent of this new babe; but Ah Moy number three cuddled up to her mother and gave vent to tears. Ching Fo, seeing how deeply she grieved for a place on her mother's knee, tried to console her with a little sleeve-dog, which he presented with great show of ceremony.

"Take this, daughter of mine," he said, "and weep no more, for in the next incarnation mayhap thou shalt be born a male. The yoke that galls thee is of thy own making, pretty one, and when thou hast atoned for sins committed in a past incarnation, it will come to pass that thou shalt be no more a despised female. Take the dog and — mayest thou achieve!"

Ah Moy took the dog and held it in her little brown arms, but her hurt was too deep to be so easily healed. She soon laid it down and clung to her nurse and cried and behaved like a very jealous little girl.

But a great festival called the "feast of dolls," was near, and when her father took her on his arm to see the shops, set out in dazzling array, and when sweets mysteriously found their way into her sleeve pockets, she dried her tears and joined with her sisters in the festivities.

For six enchanted days the celebration continued, with its round of merry-making. The go-down was ransacked for dolls of mothers and grandmothers, and the tiniest toddlers in the neighborhood exchanged calls and brought gifts. The Ching Fo family donned its richest silks and kept open house, while games and other amusements were the order of the day. A new doll was purchased for each daughter in the family and as all must be dressed in silk and have many pieces of miniature furniture, it was a busy time; and when the festival was over and all the dolls were stored away, to be seen no more for a year, little Ah Moy had forgotten her trouble and contentedly settled into her place.

The fifth day of the fifth month brought another festival of great importance — the "Boy's Festival," and Ching Fo determined to observe this with a display that should be worthy of his son. According to custom, there should be at this season a pole, flying a fish, for each son in the family. But Ching Fo waived the strict letter of the law on this occasion and raised a whole school of carp in front of his house — some for nephews, some for prospective sons, and others for sons-in-law; while within doors miniature warriors and all the paraphernalia of a soldier's train were arranged.

On the streets were processions of old and young, climbing the long hill to the temple. Never before in all her three thousand years had Hirati had so many young mothers before her; never before had the temple been so thronged with boys. Up the long mountain path Ching

Fo decided that his son and heir should be taken, and to this end he detailed a retinue of servants. In a sedan chair, bespangled with gold embroidery and closed in with heavy silk curtains, the mother and infant were placed. Two servants preceded them to beat off the crowd, while strung out in single file behind were the daughters and their nurses, an old woman to act as adviser in case of accident, and friends and relatives innumerable. Four men carried the sedan chair, while each rikisha was attended by one pull man and one push man, making in all a dozen or more servants in attendance upon this blinking baby.

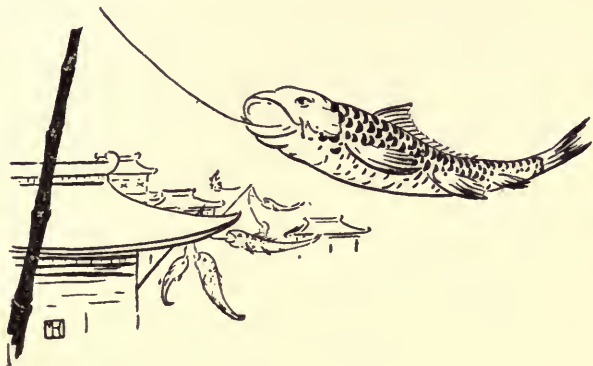
If ever a young mother was proud, it was the little wife of Ching Fo as she stood with her son before Hirati that day; old friends congratulated her; the poor looked with envy upon her fine cortège, and even Hirati seemed to smile down upon her.

In the afternoon a priest, with shaven head and yellow robe, had himself let down from the highest point of jutting rock, in order that he might indulge in grandiose prophecy concerning the future of the babe; and later, this same priest performed juggleries and sword-dances and swallowed fire and spat out ribbons, and by a magic sentence changed water into wine. So passed a delightful day, and, as the mists of evening crept over the distant hills, Mrs. Ching Fo and her party turned homeward, tired out with pleasure.

During all the gala day the son had uttered no protest, but had slept and eaten, and, like a true philosopher, closed his eyes when the smoke of incense blew too strongly upon him.

After the festival was over and the toys were all laid away, rice and chop-sticks took the place of sweets, and everything fell back into the old, uneventful groove. The little girls chanted their lessons from morning until night;

the frogs and insects kept up their music; and the rats scrambled through the windows and down the chimney in search of food. Sing Lee rode over in his rikisha once a week to gossip, and, taking it all in all, life in the Ching Fo household was happy and heaven seemed propitious.



IV

ANOTHER year had slipped away, and Ah Moy number three was growing slender and graceful. Her nimble step was always pattering beside her father, whom she followed with the sweet constancy of an affectionate nature. Although it was high time that her feet were bound, like those of other young girls, nothing had yet been done about it, except that Ching Fo had several times conversed with his wife on the subject and had had the child's bed removed to an out-house — that her moans might not disturb the family.

Ah Moy prattled about the binding in her pretty baby fashion and thought that when a two and half-inch shoe could be got on her foot, she would look very beautiful.

"Father, tell me the story about lilies growing in places where pretty little feet have trod," Ah Moy said one bright morning as she slipped her hand into his.

"Yes, daughter. It is said that the last empress of the Shan dynasty wore such tiny shoes that yellow lilies sprang out of the ground wherever she trod."

"Father, do fairies have little feet?"

"Yes, daughter. Fairies, so beloved by little children, have small feet."

"And will my betrothed love me better, if I have my feet bound?" the child continued.

"Yes," replied the father, "no refined Chinaman wishes to marry a woman with large feet."

These same questions, and many more, Ah Moy put to her mother, who answered with sadness in her tone,

"Yes, yes; it is the custom, and women have little voice in the matter."

"Women must obey the men of their family, whether they wish to do so or not," she again continued.

"Oh, mamma," the child cried, "your little girl will not be disobedient. I will be brave and keep my little dog close in my arms."

"Yes," said the mother, "perhaps the little dog will help to comfort you through the trying ordeal."

As she said this an expression of pain came into her face, but she brushed it away with a nervous motion of the hand and said:

"We will wait till father says so. It will be time enough when he speaks."

That evening, in answer to an inquiry from his wife, Ching Fo replied, "Yes, it must be done soon, but let her run about a little longer. It is nearly time for the plum blossom festival, and I love to see her go dancing down the paths before me, to watch the bloom breaking through the bark. Let her run until the festival is over."

He felt the balm in the air and the soft clearness of the lengthened days, and a tenderness crept over him which made the prattle of his children unusually sweet. So he said again to his wife:—

"Let her run. Child life is short enough at best. When the festival is over, we will attend to the foot-binding."

His wife made a pretty, resigned bow, but her husband noticed an expression in her eye not altogether in accord with her usual submissiveness.

"She is strong and brave," he added, "and she will bear it well."

"Yes, yes; she is strong and if it must be done—it

must be done," and casting a pathetic glance at her own crippled feet, she hobbled out of the room.

Ching Fo's eyes followed her with a look of surprise. He had never suspected that his wife was dissatisfied with her lot, or that she had any opinions of her own.

"I must send for her and learn the meaning of the look in her face," he decided. So he clapped his hands and a servant entered.

"Han Kow," he said, "inform the madam that I would have converse with her."

"The madam?" the man replied, "I know not where to look for her. I have seen her but once to-day, and then in conversation with a strange woman at the back gate."

"Find her," the master commanded angrily.

Han Kow fled from the room and hastened through the house and the open court to the servants' quarters, where he found the mistress entertaining her son with a toy. When told that the master wished her to report to him immediately, she hurried, like a good wife, into his presence.

"Let us speak more frankly of the foot-binding," Ching Fo said, "is everything in readiness?"

"There are bandages in plenty and the bed, as thou knowest, is removed beyond hearing," she replied.

"I like not thine answers to-day," frowned Ching Fo, "hast thou told me all? Have you not had conversation with some one outside the family?"

"I have seen no one," she answered, "except a worthy woman who asked for refreshments to bear her up on a long journey."

This did not entirely satisfy the husband, but he turned the conversation to the coming plum-blossom season.

"We must prepare for many guests," he said, "for

there will come to stay with us two nephews from beyond the great canal and a son of my uncle, and there will be friends and callers at all hours. You must see to it that everything is in readiness."

"Everything will be in readiness," responded his wife, and, seeing that he had nothing further to say to her, she left the room. The next day was so fully occupied with preparations for her husband's guests that she did not have time for thought about foot-binding.

Crisp hog skin and mushroom sauce filled the wife's mind; preserved eggs that had been laid away in ashes of straw by her own dainty fingers, were to be resurrected, and sweets, beyond the brightest dreams of the little girls, must be patted into shape. Besides preparing the refreshments, the lintels of the doors and the blank spaces on the walls must be covered with red paper, and over the bungalow must float a new silk flag.

And because the little wife of Ching Fo had so much to do that she did not know where to begin, she decided to send a rikisha coolie over to the home of Sing Lee and invite the worthy matron of that house to come and confer with her concerning some of the details of the work. It was a happy thought and turned a gloomy morning into a sunny afternoon.

The wife of Sing Lee was much pleased at the honor paid her, and was glad to have an excuse for going out, so she made hasty preparations to obey the summons. She belonged to the wealthy class and would not, if she could, and could not, if she would, move without a maid, so she brought with her Lo Ming, a normal footed servant. Being heavily built and the mother of many children, the wife of Sing Lee waddled like a goose on her three-inch shoes; but Lo Ming stood firm on wooden clogs and supported her mistress. Lo Ming also wore ornaments in

her hair that jingled, and smooth, green bracelets on her wrists, which were placed there soon after she was born.

Besides her maid, the lady brought along an infant and its nurse, a man to run ahead and a push man, so that the string of attendants upon this one informal call was five. The nurse and the baby and the maid came into the house with the mistress, but the coolies curled themselves up on the sidewalk and went to sleep.

Leaning heavily upon the shoulder of her maid, the visitor entered the presence of her hostess with much formality and rustling of silken trousers. As soon as the ceremony of entrance was over, the good lady brought a few choice recipes out of her sleeve and proceeded to explain their special merits. Then followed conversation about the coming festivities. Madam Sing Lee offered to lend ivory chop-sticks and supply any lack of dainties from her own store. Many little nothings were discussed, much tea was sipped, and the water clock pointed to the hour of five before Mrs. Sing Lee, with her train of attendants, took the road for home.

The next day, however, things began to move in the house of Ching Fo. The servants were called together and the work was laid out in true business-like style, the Dragon flag was finished, packages of fire-crackers and incense-sticks were brought out of their boxes, and a glare of red paper transformed the doors and lintels. A week of this strenuous work and the house of Ching Fo broke into loud jubilee.

Double-headers were exploded and tom-toms beaten; stringed instruments and wind instruments throbbed weird music on the evening breeze; processions of children chanted Buddhist hymns, and long rows of lanterns cast a magic glow over the scene. The whole of China was newly shaven and newly clad; spotless white stockings peeped

from beneath trousers of heavenly blue; queues were lengthened and swung artistically about the heels; while in every house, even those of the poorest, a little incense smoldered before a shrine or curled over the graves of pet animals or birds.

When the feast of the dead was ready Ching Fo placed the spirit-recalling incense in a burner before the ancestral shrine, and, with eyes slightly inclined toward the nose, meditated upon the sacred faces of his dead. As the perfume filled the room, he folded his hands and fixed his eyes upon the fire until he saw a spirit hover in the smoke, take shape, grow brighter, become illumined, and then softly fade away. How long he meditated and how intense the strain, was only revealed by the drops of perspiration that beaded his shaven forehead. After a season of silence he arose, went to the table and religiously set apart space for his invisible guests. Then there gathered around the board such male members of his family as had paid their debts, dissipated their "wrath matter," and were able to wish each other good luck for a thousand years to come. Abstemiousness and ceremonious politeness characterized this feast of the dead; but, after it was over, for ten enchanted days, poetry and "squeeze pidgin," * gambling and drinking followed.

To each of his friends Ching Fo sent a present, wrapped in many folds of ceremonious paper, while to his children he brought gifts of toys and fruit, and lavished upon them an exuberance of love. "Perfume of the lotus," "dew of the morning" and "heaven born," were not too extravagant names for him to bestow upon his daughters during the plum-blossom season.

* A sort of commission, generally in the form of a present, which is exacted by Chinamen who assist in arranging the details of a trade.

The trees, about which centered a large part of the festivities, were gnarled and old; green moss hung heavily on the north sides, and many birds nested in their boughs. But they were transformed, before the festival was over, by fluttering scraps of paper, on which were written verses. In this happy contest of poetry-making, all were welcome. Whether visionary young women dashed off a line and twisted it with deft fingers around a twig, or whether sedate old men pondered long over a sonnet, was a matter of little moment to Ching Fo; for he felt that the great watchful heavens proclaimed the equality of man at this season. Confucius had taught, long centuries before, that all the black-haired men were brethren, and Ching Fo, as his heart expanded with the budding spring, felt the oneness of his kind. Beside his realization of fellowship, there had been poured into his soul myth after myth concerning the festival, each of which had sunk in and been absorbed until every detail of the occasion symbolized something either beautiful, mysterious, or terrible. To gather his family under a tree while he struck its limbs with a long pole and brought down upon them a shower of scented petals was, to his mind, a baptism which carried with it the sacredness of a religious rite. To buy birds in cages for his children to liberate, was to him an invocation to the goddess of Mercy that all slaves might go free. To have his son seated at his right hand was to honor his father and his mother and to insure the succession of the family worship.

THE plum-blossom season was over. The poems had all been gathered from the tree, and folded in baskets to be reread as time and inclination favored. The children's toys were in the go-down without a mar. Things that would have gone to pieces like egg shells in the hands of western children were safely stored away for another holiday, and life in the bungalow was settling back into its usual monotony. One evening, when the sky was golden in the west, Ching Fo stepped into the path and turned toward the old tree to see if, per chance, it was putting out any new bloom. As he did so, he heard Ah Moy's light step behind him and smiled back an invitation to her to accompany him. They walked leisurely, Ah Moy's tongue prattling about some childish grief. As they passed close to the wall which enclosed the premises, a bit of paper came fluttering toward them.

"Some belated guest," thought Ching Fo, as he unfolded a neatly-written page. To his astonishment, he found that, although done in the refined language of the Wenli (a language spoken only by the educated class), it contained a criticism on the custom of foot-binding. By what authority it had been written, and by whose audacious hand intruded upon his premises, were questions that knit his brow and darkened his eye. Naturally his first thought was of the missionaries, who had so persistently maintained their school below, on the Yang-tse-Kiang river. But as he looked the document over, he saw that it bore none of the marks of their work.

"They never write in verse," he said to himself, "and

they would not — they could not — use the beautiful ideographs of the Wenli.”

Ah Moy saw the cloud that had spread over her father's face and slipped her little hand into his, but he did not notice her now. The sentiment expressed in that trifling verse had stung him as an insult. It was his first thought to burn the sheet and thus end the matter, but, after a little hesitation, he folded it deep into his sleeve, all the while dubiously shaking his head.

“If the wife should get a glimpse of it,” he thought, “it would add fuel to the fire already kindled,” then, turning to his little daughter, he took her hand and together they walked back to the house. There everything was as they had left it; the lamp flickered on the household shrine, the setting sun still worked its miracle of purple and gold on the mountain peaks, while blue sheets of mist were gloaming in the valley; but Ching Fo only saw the poem which had been aimed by sacrilegious hands at his family life.

The more he thought of it the more he felt that it was a matter of too much importance to be passed lightly over. It came beating into his heart that he must consult with someone about it, and that this someone must not be his wife. In this state of mind, he put on a heavily wadded blouse and went out into the street. At once a swarm of rikisha coolies gathered about him to solicit his patronage, but without heeding them he turned into the narrow path that led up to the temple. He had gone but a few steps, however, before he turned back and addressed the nearest coolie, saying:—

“Take me down to the house of Sing Lee.”

It was but a short run down the hill to his friend's house, and as he caught a glimpse of its quiet roof he decided in his heart to be governed by Sing Lee's advice.

As he stepped out of the rikisha Ching Fo felt in his sleeve to make sure that the offensive paper was still there, and then struck the old bronze bell a vigorous blow. A servant unbarred the door, and the visitor passed up a pair of wooden stairs to the roof, where he found Sing Lee, facing the south and softly strumming a small stringed instrument. Ching Fo paused to listen.

After a short prelude, a voice rose clear and sweet in an old, familiar song:

“The sun is setting and I loose my boat,
And lightly o’er the misty waters float —”

The verse was not finished, however, for Sing Lee felt the approach of his friend, and, laying the instrument down, arose and bowed very slow, saying,

“The unexpected happens when Ching Fo leaves his own delightful home to accept the hospitality of Sing Lee. All is well at the bungalow, I hope.”

“Yes,” replied Ching Fo, “all is well.”

“Art thou fully rested after the joys of the plum-blossom festival?” inquired Sing Lee.

“Fully,” returned Ching Fo, “and ready to resume the duties of the hour. Are the gods good to thee?”

“Yes, the gods are good,” answered Sing Lee.

“Music hath charms,” remarked Ching Fo, “let us hear a song.”

At which Sing Lee, with a merry twinkle in his eye, sang,—

“You ask me why I greet the priest, but not his god?

The god sits mute, the man, at least returns my nod.”

“A characteristic prank,” remarked Ching Fo, “wilt thou never leave off nonsense? I came to consult you upon a serious matter.”

"Very well, then, we shall be serious. Is there something of mutual interest?"

"Yes," said Ching Fo, "something of interest to all good men. Hast thou not heard how the foreign devils are pushing into the land, and how they intrude their ideas upon us?"

"Yes, there is an ever-increasing crop of them, I admit, but we must make the best of it," answered Sing Lee.

At this Ching Fo scrutinized the face of Sing Lee to see whether it betrayed sympathy with the foreigner. But, seeing nothing, he continued in a careless manner, "Another poem has been added to those already gathered at the festival."

"Allow me the pleasure of reading it," requested Sing Lee, "perchance the last is best — it sometimes happens so."

Thus reassured, Ching Fo pulled the obnoxious poem from his sleeve and handed it to his friend, who read it with mingled amusement and surprise.

"What mountebank has written this," he exclaimed as he finished. "It reads like a lay from the 'Beggar's Pagoda.' Surely the writer cannot boast of his wit, although he has written in the Wenli."

"No," replied Ching Fo, "but there is danger in it. Such things do harm if not looked after. It is against the law of China to put upon paper that which will cause disrespect of ancestral customs."

"Yes, yes," answered Sing Lee, "but we all know that there is an effort being made to create sentiment against the practice of foot-binding."

"What right have they to intrude upon our home life, or to thrust their opinions upon those who do not want them?"

"Oh, the foreigners are not so much concerned about



"The plague of girls."

✓ ethics. They just go ahead with their own ideas and let the consequences fall where they will. But, to tell the truth, I have had some serious misgivings upon the subject of foot-binding, myself —"

"You do not mean to say that you would have it discontinued?" demanded Ching Fo in some astonishment.

"Oh, no," replied Sing Le, "I am not ready to say that, but, do you not think that the torture is unnecessary?"

Ching Fo sat in silence for some moments before he replied:

"No; what we prize in our women is the sacred thought which they hold toward motherhood. If given liberty to run about as much as they wish, their minds might be diverted from their home-life, and then, slowly but surely, the generations to come would degenerate. Even admitting that in some cases women do suffer with their feet, that is less harmful than having their minds filled with frivolity. It is to the custom of foot-binding that we are indebted for the purity and the homestaying habits of our women. We hear much of the worship of women in western countries, but theirs is only the worship of the young and the beautiful. We worship women whose faces have been transfigured by patience and long suffering into good mothers."

"That is all true," acknowledged Sing Lee, "I am not ready to advise against foot-binding; but, still, I say that it is very painful, and may some day be considered unnecessary."

"In that case," returned Ching Fo, "we shall lose one of the greatest of our moral safeguards."

For a little longer time the two discussed the disturbing subject, but arrived at no reasonable solution of its value. So Ching Fo returned the paper to his sleeve and went out

into the moonlit path. As he walked toward his home, he felt a rankling in his heart against all foreigners. Although he had arrived at no definite conclusion about the authorship of the poem, he felt it to be by some outside barbarian and that it was a blow at cherished institutions. He was carried away by a flood of hate for a race that was not his race and for blood that was not his blood.

Upon entering his own grounds, he closed the gate with a bang, and, after placing the heavy iron bars across it, he called his wife. That model of obedience made haste to answer, and her husband said with determination in his voice.

"It is time that the bandages be placed upon the feet of the third daughter. I therefore command thee to have everything done that is customary upon such occasions."

To his astonishment, for the first time in her life, his wife showed unwillingness to obey his order. At this he demanded of her a full confession of all that she thought, and an explanation of how she had arrived at an opinion so in conflict with the traditions of their ancestors.

Then the wife timidly confessed that the women of the neighborhood had been talking together of the cruelty of foot-binding and that they had heard of a society formed in Shanghai for the purpose of creating sentiment against the custom. She told him that the ladies who were interested were the wives of men in high positions, and that some of them went to the Buddhist temple to pray and she expressly assured him that they were not missionaries or teachers of any foreign religion. At this juncture, she took from her sleeve a copy of the *North China Daily News* and pointed out to her liege lord an advertisement, which read:

"Natural Feet Society. President, Mrs. Drummond:

"This society has been formed to distribute pamphlets,

leaflets and pictures, among the Chinese, on the subject of the prevailing practice of foot-binding, to encourage the formation of leagues, and in other ways to influence native opinion. It also proposes to offer, from time to time, prizes for the best Chinese essays on the subject.

“The ladies of the committee solicit donations of \$1 and upwards, and also ask all those interested in freeing Chinese women from the bondage of this cruel custom, to seek out fresh means of distributing literature, whether through the kind assistance of missionaries, or merchants, either foreign or Chinese, or, better still, of personal friends.

“All ladies willing to help toward the objects of the society, in either of these ways, are requested to send their names to one of the Shanghai secretaries, to be enrolled as associates. It is hoped that in all the out-ports, local committees may shortly be formed, and that in this way foreign women residing in China may be found united in doing what they can to save little girls from the torture of a custom that has nothing to recommend it save that it is the custom. The co-operation of Chinese ladies will be still more gladly welcomed.

“The object being to uproot a fashion, rather than to combat a principle, it is especially hoped that ladies will, as far as possible, act on their own initiative, each doing what she can in her own immediate circle, without waiting for instructions from the committee, but acting as she thinks best to advance the aim of the society, remembering that a fashion like foot-binding, which is not based upon reason, is quite as likely to be overturned by an appeal to good taste or good feeling as by the most learned of arguments.”

The names of the ladies who formed the committee were signed.

When Ching Fo had finished reading this paper, he glared at his wife in angry amazement, but before he could find words to express his indignation, she said:—

“I have hobbled all my life on crippled feet and I would that I might save our youngest daughter from the torture. I understand that from your decision there is no appeal, and that it were madness to think of disobeying your orders; but I most sincerely request that you consider the matter a little further. It may be that we have come to a new era when the torture of our female children can be omitted.”

Ching Fo listened to her longer than she had expected. He even weighed her words carefully, but finally said:—

“I have seen the foreign women in Shanghai tramping about like men, and I know that their ideas of propriety are very far from the Chinese standard. Their feet are large, and their dresses are drawn in at the waist in a way that would make a Chinese woman blush. Some of the best of them have been obliged to modify their apparel before an introduction to Chinese ladies. Women who deform their waists and expose their necks are not in a position to offer advice to us.”

“No. But it does not necessarily follow that our little daughter would become immodest because she had natural feet,” said the mother.

“When women can run about, they are in danger of falling into bad habits; then comes neglect of duties and disobedience to husbands, and then the foundation of the home is in danger. Women are not strong-minded enough to take care of themselves, and it is necessary that men should regulate their lives for them. Women are honored for their virtues and not because they can tramp about like men,” replied Ching Fo.

Then, taking a copy of the Confucian Code, he read:

"A woman requires no extraordinary talent; her countenance requires no exquisite beauty; her words require no fluent lips; her labor requires no high degree of dexterity. Let her be chaste, modest, innocent, sober, and economical. Let her preserve her modesty and choose her words. This constitutes female virtue."

"The binding of the feet," continued he, "is calculated to enhance all these charms. Suffering is the price of a subjugated will, and women must be kept in subjugation. Remember that the third daughter has in her keeping the welfare of a new generation and all that makes for its good must be fostered. What would Ting Ho say when he comes to manhood, to find that his betrothed had large feet? It would not do. So now I command thee to have the bandages placed on the feet of Ah Moy, number three, to-morrow morning."

"It shall be done," said the mother, and she sorrowfully limped from the room.

Soon after she was gone, Ah Fat came in and the subject of foot-binding again came under discussion.

"Yes," he said, "I have seen the poem sent out by the anti-foot-binding society and I rather like it. I believe they are working in a way to do good. I have no daughters, but if I had, I think I should have them unbound. The custom causes great suffering, and I see no reason why women may not be good wives, with natural feet. I have heard it said that some of the mission schools, where the experiment has been tried, find it difficult to get husbands for their girls; but let them try it. This new anti-foot-binding society is working in a way to make friends. They write poems and conform to Chinese etiquette."

"But," remonstrated Ching Fo, "you must remember that in a great majority of cases the family life of the Chinese is happy, and that the Chinese mother is the

best of mothers. Would she continue to be so if she were allowed to run about wherever she pleased? ”

“ Yes,” replied Ah Fat, “ I think she would. The woman has the interest of her family at heart, as much as her husband has, and she has sorrows enough without our inflicting this one. But,” he added pleasantly, “ a daughterless man’s opinion is of little value, and, after all, each of us must act in accordance with his own judgment.”

So they changed the subject of conversation, and sipped tea until the hour of the rat, when, by the light of the moon, Ah Fat took his rikishaw for home.



VI

? **A**H MOY submitted to the process of foot-binding without a protest. Obedience, repression of emotion, and a strange indifference to physical pain, were inheritances bequeathed to her from uncounted generations of ancestors.

Bandages, two and a half yards long, by two inches wide, were drawn around her feet, in such a way as to force all the toes, except the large one, under the soles. Twice a day and for many weeks, they were tightened, each time driving her toes further under, until they came peeping out on the inside of her instep. For the first year her nurse thought the muscles would yield to the pressure and retain their new shape, but poor little Ah Moy's feet had more than their share of elasticity in them, and every time the bandages were taken off, the muscles sprang back to their natural position, until, finally, it became necessary to break the bones. After this was done and additional straps and bandages fastened around the instep, the toes kept their place. But in a few days they became so swollen and painful that Ah Moy sat crying in her room all day long. Her little sleeve-dog gave her no more pleasure, and she had to hang her feet over the foot board of her bed so as to deaden the pain. Her father came and gave her opium and commanded her to move about; but her sufferings had gone to a point where she could no longer obey.* Under her eyes came the great black lines

* The Italian Mother-Superior at Han Kow told the author of this book that, with the best of care, many of the girls died during the ordeal of foot-binding.

and into her face came that curious shade of yellow that is never seen except in connection with foot-binding.

Ching Fo and his wife both thought that more than likely the third daughter would die under the ordeal. She wasted to a skeleton, and gangrene tore off great pieces of her flesh. Blood-poison spread through her system, and fever painted scarlet patches on her cheek.

But the God of Fate had it written in his book that Ah Moy was not yet to die, so at last he sent the spirit of healing to brood over her, and after three years of suffering the worst was over. The color came back to her face; she again found pleasure in insect music and the song of birds; she heard the sighing of the pines and saw the shadow of the clouds, as they threw dark patches on the mountain side. And, strange, oh, passing strange, the refinement of torture through which she had passed left upon her an irresistible charm,— a charm which comes only to those who have suffered to the point of breaking. Ching Fo saw it, and called the attention of his wife to the soft lines of beauty that had been wrought in their daughter's face.

"It is the subtle charm of the little-foot woman," said he.

"Yes, yes," replied his wife, "she is very beautiful. Sing Lee's family will, no doubt, be very proud of her."

"We must now look to her education," said the father, "she must learn to chant the Buddhist prayers, to embroider and even to make short rhymes; for, although women are not supposed to add much to poetry, it is very becoming in them to compose verses."

Thus a new era began for Ah Moy. She learned to drone her prayers for hours each day; she embroidered butterflies and lotus-leaves, and entered into happy little contests with her father in verse-making. On one occasion, when she had gone with him for a walk, he was sur-

prised to hear her compose a verse which even to his trained ear sounded well.

"Father," she said, "this place is so delightful that I feel as though I could compose a poem in its honor."

"Mayhap, if the bird sings in thine own heart, it augurs a son who shall be a poet," said her father, at which she turned her face away from him and repeated,

"A butterfly bright, on the lotus is resting,
A bird in the shade of the rushes is nesting,
A cloud throws a shadow on father and daughter
And away goes my verse on the swift running water."

"Well done, Ah Moy. Hadst thou been a boy, I should have expected great things of thee. Canst thou repeat something from one of the ancient classics?"

"Shall I repeat the poem about the young man whose father died, and left him so lonely, when he was young?" she asked.

"Yes, if you can do it well," replied the father.

But when she tried to begin her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, father, it is so sad," she exclaimed.

"Yes," assented the father, "I remember the poem. It was written more than two thousand years ago by Liu Heng. But it is still a favorite with many. If you can remember it, I should like very much to hear it."

Ah Moy then turned her face away and recited each verse correctly.

"I look up and the curtains are there, as of yore,
I look down, and there is the mat on the floor.
These things I behold, but the man is no more.
To the infinite azure his spirit has flown,
And I am left friendless, uncared for, alone,
Of solace bereft, save to weep and to moan.

The deer on the hillside caressingly bleat,
And offer the grass for their young ones to eat.
While birds of the air to their nestlings bring meat,
But I, a poor orphan must ever remain,
My heart still so sad and all burdened with pain,
For him I shall never see coming again.
'Tis a well-worn old saying, which all men allow,
'That grief stamps the deepest of lines on the brow.'
Alas, see my hair! it is silvered now.
Alas for my father, cut off in his pride!
Alas, that no more I may stand by his side.
Oh, where were the gods, when that noble man died?"

Ching Fo was so pleased to hear her repeat the whole poem without a mistake, and with so much feeling, that he pressed her little brown hand to his face, at which Ah Moy begged him to tell her a story, or repeat a verse.

So he sat down beside her and asked if she had not been learning to weave on her mother's hand-loom that day.

"Yes, father, I have unwound a cocoon of the wild silk-worm and woven it into cloth. But mamma says that I must not yet attempt the fine silk of our own cocoonery."

"Then I shall tell you about the star, Vega, which is personified in Chinese literature as a woman engaged in weaving silk," said her father. "Vega is a brilliant white star in the constellation called Lyra, and, on the seventh day of the seventh month of each year, the heavenly weaver leaves her loom and crosses over the milky way and comes in conjunction with another brilliant star, called the "Bull-driver," and together they throw out their most splendid rays. The story typifies the earthly marriage which has for its object the high duty of parenthood. When you are older you will know that China has withstood the

shocks and ravages of time better than any other nation, and that this is greatly due to the industry and home-staying qualities of the mothers. Do you understand my meaning, daughter?"

"Yes, father dear, my mother and the nuns at the monastery have often told me that the welfare of the home lies in the hands of the women. But I think the story of the heavenly-weaver the most beautiful one I have ever heard."

Such confidences made Ah Moy and her father very dear to each other. She knew that she was betrothed to Ting Ho, and that she would owe to his family her untiring service; but she had never seen her future husband, and her heart was every bit her father's. Her brother was now old enough to tyrannize over her and in many ways to command her. She had learned to treat him with ceremonious respect, never preceding him into a room nor partaking of food until he had been served; but in her heart of hearts she felt that hers was a higher mission in life than his. She felt that he represented the ancestral tombs, while she represented the children to be born, and in fancy she could hear their voices ever counseling her to be faithful to all the customs of their native land.

Her sisters were now preparing their wedding garments, for they had, like herself, been betrothed in childhood. Ah Moy, number one, had been betrothed by a go-between to a young man who lived in another province. Aside from ascertaining that he belonged to a good family, Ching Fo knew little about him; how cruel and exacting he might be, there was no means of knowing. Neither did it seem a matter of great moment to him. The marriage was in the interest of the two families, and this was the only thing to be considered. "You must have no opinions of your own," the father told his girls, "it is the duty of

daughters-in-law to serve the families that adopt them. Among your wedding-gifts will be the customary bottle of poison, with which to end your life, if it becomes unbearable; that is the only proper release from earthly troubles. It is an honorable discharge, and does not disgrace your parents."

The girls understood. They knew that the new home to which they were going was, for better or worse, with no appeal except through death. But even so, they were very happy. No knowledge had they of privileges or rights; no spirit of selfishness had ever entered the calm repose of their minds. Their wedding garments were all cut precisely alike, the only variation being in the decoration. Some were embroidered in butterflies and bamboo leaves, some with dragons and lotus flowers, interspersed with the ever present plum-blossoms. Twenty pairs of shoes, twenty pairs of linen trousers, two wedding dresses, silk bedquilts and curtains, lacquer vases and porcelain bowls, all made in the same style as those of foremothers for a thousand years past, were the essentials of their outfit. Tedious and tiresome, and for many days, the work had continued; but at last the preparations were complete, and the servants were detailed to take the eldest daughter to the home of her husband.

Before she could depart, however, Chinese etiquette demanded that she should lament for a week, moaning and weeping aloud, because she was about to leave her father's house and take up her abode among strangers. It was hard for the happy girl to lie face downwards and keep up the semblance of sorrow; but it was not in the Ching Fo blood to omit any of the ancestral usages, so she tore her hair and assumed a sad expression. Each day found her crying, with eyes made red with vermilion, and uttering words of endearment for her family and friends.

The new home to which she was going was, as yet, a far-off picture, which she saw only darkly. She knew that she was leaving her father's house to enter a family whose ancestral line was as jealously guarded as her own; but she had no idea of what the change might mean; so she cried, according to rule, until the appointed day, then smilingly took formal leave of the parental roof.

Beside her four chair-bearers, she was accompanied by two lantern-bearers, two men to run ahead, and six riki-sha laden with her effects. She was very timid, for she had never been away from her home before; but she bore up bravely and "kept the face" as a woman should do. The etiquette of the occasion demanded that she neither speak nor partake of food during the journey, so she sat tired and hungry for many an hour while her servants rested, or slept in the shade of wayside trees.

After two days she arrived at the house of her husband's family and found the incense sticks lit, the parents-in-law in their best clothes, and a feast prepared for many guests. No lover's greeting, however, was in store for her, nor any kindly act to relieve her fatigue. Her duty was to wait outside until the door was thrown open, then take her place beside her mother-in-law and solemnly perform her duties. The guests came in swarms and she bowed to each according to the prescribed rules. Sneering remarks about her feet and her clothes were made, but brought no frown upon her placid brow, and when some one threw straw upon her glossy hair, she bore it so patiently that the family was much pleased. For three days the festivities continued, during which time the bride was not permitted to leave her post of duty; but on the fourth day she was formally given to her liege lord, whom she now beheld for the first time. In appearance he was far from what she had hoped, yet she received him with

the calm exterior of a well-bred Chinese woman and went about her work as uncomplainingly as though she had selected her husband for herself.

Two years after this, the wedding of Ah Moy Number Two occurred. Like her sister, she had been betrothed by a go-between and went a long way from home.

Notwithstanding there had been no rain for several months, and money was becoming scarce, the same elaborate preparations took place in Ching Fo's house that had taken place for Ah Moy, number one. Presents were exchanged; parental advice given; the bottle of poison put carefully where it could be reached—in case of need,—and for a week preceding her departure the weeping and wailing had been performed.



VII

“**L**ET us wait before giving the third daughter in marriage,” said Chong Fo’s wife to him one day. “She is young and the signs point to a period of distress.”

“No,” replied Ching Fo, “first consideration must be given to the great things of life, and the great things are the settling of the domestic relations.”

“But if the drouth should continue?” questioned she, with womanly anxiety; “there are ugly rumors of famine disturbing the neighborhood.”

“If the drouth continues,” the husband answered, “we shall bear it, I hope, as patiently as did our ancestors. Drouths have always come and gone. If this one continues, why then, it continues; but it is not well to invite it. Speculation upon misfortune is an invitation for it to come.” The wife said no more, and with the help of the youngest daughter they continued to make the pretty clothes for her wedding and to lay them away in readiness for the day of her going forth.

In spite of his habitual composure, however, anxious lines crept across Ching Fo’s forehead. His rice-fields, that were wont to look so beautiful and green beneath the summer sun, were now parched and brown, and the harvest was withering beyond recovery. Mile after mile of the marvelous purple that characterizes the arid atmosphere quivered in the air, and the mountains became apparitions that angled up to meet the unfailing blue of the sky. Occasionally, at mid-day, a high cloud lay motionless

above a phantom peak, but it was the wool-white cloud that throws no water down. All this Ching Fo saw with the feeling that a crisis hung over him. For days at a time a psychic strain seemed to foreshadow misfortune. His wife and his third daughter watched anxiously for the cheerfulness that usually characterized the father's deportment; but things grew worse instead of better.

Rumors of foreign war ships gathering in the ports spread over the country, and as Ching Fo looked away into the purple mist, he saw a new apparition take its place beside the one called Drouth, an apparition no less terrible, whose name was War.

From time immemorial, the evil spirit that dwells in foreign affairs had spread dismay among the people, and now it threatened to tear asunder the nation. Ching Fo seldom mentioned such things to the women of the household; but he felt bound to explain to them now that nothing could be so fraught with harm as to have the quiet of their home broken into by a swarm of foreign soldiers. Not much of this could Ah Moy understand; she thought that a few men might have to be sacrificed and a few homes bereft of their sons, but beyond that the fears of her father were meaningless to her and failed to arouse anything more than a ripple on the smooth surface of her life. She continued the preparations for her wedding, and, when the week of lamentation arrived, with a pious sense of duty she laid aside her work and assumed the garb of sorrow.

"I would not disgrace my family," she said, "by appearing happy at leaving home."

So with loud moaning and crying, she lay face downward on the bed and repeated, as her sisters had done, "Oh, dear, I am so sad because I am about to leave my father and mother and go to a new home. Oh, dear, I

must now leave my father and my mother and go to the home of my husband!"

But the God of Fate had it written in his book that the third daughter should not be married.

"And having writ, moved on —
And not her piety nor wit
Could lure him back to cancel half a line,
Nor all her tears wash out one word of it."

The happy days of lamentation, during which she cried outwardly but inwardly was full of joy, brought not the wedding-day, for Ten Wang had already turned the river of her life into quite another channel.

Shut in from the outside world, and her time filled with pleasant duties, the bride-to-be had no conception of the fact that over China a storm gathered which would shake it to the very center. A more prophetic ear than hers might have heard the rumbling and a more prophetic eye might have seen the darkness that was settling over the land; but the third daughter's heart kept the even tenor of its way until the last day of the lamentations, when a sudden crash came out of the blue that turned her little world all upside down.

Sing Lee was the first to bring the news and inform Ching Fo that his son, who was so soon to be a bridegroom, had been called out to fight for his country.

"Pandemonium is loose," he said, as he slipped into a chair, "and the Righteous Defenders (Boxers) are preparing for an active campaign. The foreigners are again trying to pluck us as a housewife plucks a goose, and we must drive them back."

"I feared it, I feared it," said Ching Fo, trembling with emotion, "on the Yang-tse-Kiang, it is the English, to the

north, it is the Russian, while on the coast it is the Germans." At this he groaned aloud and added, "We cannot endure it, we cannot endure it!"

"It is useless for us to tell the foreigners that what the western world calls prosperity has no resemblance to our own ideas on that subject; it is useless to tell them that we do not wish to enter the turmoil of the world. They cannot appreciate our love for seclusion, and reverence for ancient customs."

At this moment, Ah Fat arrived and informed the two men that the Righteous Defenders * were gathering in the neighborhood, and that, as they came to the rescue of the country without compensation, they must be fed and, if need be, clothed.

As this phase of the case came into Ching Fo's consciousness, he sprang quickly from his chair and went into the open court, for now it was a case in which the women must be consulted. The amount of food which they could contribute, and the number of charms and bandages which they could prepare, were questions which belonged strictly to their department. As he turned toward the kitchen, he saw that the street was full of wild-eyed runners and that every one appeared to be in a state of madness. Gentlemen were shouting to get themselves carried hither and thither, and the poor coolie, finding himself belabored on every hand, poured into the din a constant jabber of dialect.

At the back-gate of the bungalow, frightened females were holding such counsel of war as only women can. The wife of Sing Lee had been among the first to arrive and had informed Mrs. Ching Fo of her son's response to the call

* The Righteous Defenders are a body of young men called in China, "Society-Men," who meet in secret, to watch and if necessary to protect the homes and the ancient tombs.

of the Righteous Defenders. This meant, of course, that the young folks must wait for a more auspicious time for their wedding. Ah Moy was still lamenting, when her mother called her to come and hear what her prospective mother-in-law had to say. Before she could make herself presentable, however, a dozen more women had invaded the kitchen and were expressing their opinions concerning the uprising.

"It is all the missionaries," said one woman, "they have made the spirits angry. Do you know they sell coal oil to be used in the lamps. Everybody knows that our ancestors never used anything but nut oil on the shrines." "Yes," said Lee Loy, "and the missionaries build their houses without any regard to the Wind god. That is another thing that makes the spirits angry."

Just then a wrinkled old woman was helped to her feet and gave it as her opinion that there were worse things than the missionaries or the coal oil. "The railroads are creeping into the country, and they do say that they lay their foundations on children's bones!"

"Yes," cried another of these wise ones, "and they do say that the foreign devils use children's eyes in making their medicines."

Then Mrs. Ching Fo added fuel to the fire by remarking that the foreign bible commanded men to leave father and mother and follow Christ, "which, as you all know, is in direct conflict with the teaching of Confucius. It is against the custom of the country for sons to leave their parents."

This speech produced such a storm of disapprobation that when Ching Fo appeared on the scene, he could not make himself heard at all. He stood for some moments waiting for the babble to cease; then took the wonder-eyed Ah Moy by the hand and returned to the front room.

"The women are swarming," he said, "and I was not able to get a hearing. When they settle down a little, I will go back and see what can be done about food."

So chattered the women and so argued the men, and so gathered the storm which was about to break over their defenseless heads. The third daughter listened and tried to grasp the meaning of what she saw and heard; tried to understand why the men stood in knots on the streets and why the faces of the women were pallid with fear. As she saw the fire creep into the calm eye of her father, a great desire seized her to become a part of the wild ocean that was lashing itself into foam. If martyrs were needed, why might she not be one?

When a lull in the conversation gave her an opportunity, she whispered into the ear of her father her desire to help her country. But her patriotism received a check when he answered,

"A little-foot girl can do nothing. You must wait."

At which Ah Moy glanced down at her crippled feet and replied:

"Yes, I see, I can do nothing but wait."

It was noon before any definite plans had been fixed upon, and the women had been induced to set about preparing food for the Righteous Defenders; but when once commenced their work went bravely on. Kettles of fluffy rice stood in long rows and pans of dried mushrooms, with inviting squares of pork, simmered over the fire. Bandages with which to wind the legs were prepared, and many a good luck sign was stitched upon blouse and shoes. After the women were at work the men congregated at "The Hall of the Holy Country" to further discuss the situation and to devise ways and means for the advancement of their cause. Patriotic pictures were hung on the walls of the room, and mottoes selected from the writings

of Chinese sages, were repeated, or written by skillful hands on the doors and lintels. The Righteous Defenders gathered in long lines to practice their mysterious drills and to turn their faces to the north for courage and to the east for spiritual enlightenment. They also invoked the gods and the spirits of their ancestors. Ting Ho, the betrothed of Ah Moy, number three, was with them, the embodiment of a superstitious Chinaman, calm, head erect, ceremoniously polite, without a flicker of emotion in his black eyes, although he had sprung from home and wedding feast into the welter of war. On his blouse was embroidered that great symbol of purity, the lotus. Placed there by a virtuous mother, he held it as a sacred trust, and as security that no evil-desire should enter his soul. As he marched around the hall in line with his comrades, he lit an incense stick and reverently placed it in the ashes before the White Tiger, then wheeled and stood erect beside his companions-in-arms.

As the evening advanced, the old men came in, one by one, to give counsel and speak words of encouragement. Leaning heavily upon a walking stick, Tin Sing, a man of great age, pointed to a motto on the wall, which read, "The strong shall not prevail," and in courteous language called the attention of the young soldiers to the fact that they were members of an ancient order, which had from time immemorial sprung to the defense of the country in time of need. He reminded them that only men of unspotted reputation were eligible to their ranks, and urged them to remember that they were protected by the gods.

"It is," said he, "one of the oldest traditions of China that the weak may overthrow the strong. You are not training for public audiences or for display, but for a system of self-defense, in the most exact sense of the term. If

you are true, there will come a power from Heaven to turn away the bullets of your adversaries. The gods are with you, and you need not fear. We look to you for protection against an enemy who comes to despoil us of our homes. It is armed with prodigious weapons of destruction, but you have recourse to a higher power."

When he had finished speaking, the young soldiers bowed, retreated three steps and bowed again, then wheeled and assumed a respectful attitude toward Ching Fo, who now began to speak. His voice came forth in the gentle tones of a man of sorrow; he disclaimed the honorable years and the eloquence of the distinguished man who had preceded him, but he arose to call the attention of the Righteous Defenders to the fact that concessions granted to foreigners, either for purposes of trade or for religious propaganda, had always resulted in the setting up by the newcomers of claims adverse to the wishes of the Chinese people.

"China," declared he, "has no need of the outside world. When once the reins are relaxed and the Western civilization established in our land, the end is in sight. Our people cannot make a living under the foreigners' system. The labor-saving machines, of which they boast so much, are not suited to our needs. Our country is too densely populated to make use of steam and electricity. It has already come to pass," exclaimed he, raising his voice, "that the cotton mills of Shanghai, which are owned and operated by Englishmen, have flooded the market with goods which are sold at prices below those of our home weavers, and the result is that, in some cases, the little hand-loom of the women are idle and the workers are dying of hunger. But these facts are nothing to the foreign devil who wishes to establish himself in our country. It

must come that we shall drive the horde of intruders back."

Following him, Ah Fat made a short but eloquent address. He quoted the words of the sage who said:

"All the black-haired men are brethren, and they shall prevail against the barbarians who come from other lands. Destiny has watched over you and prepared you for this day. The God of War is with you, and you may command the hosts of heaven. Let them thunder, with their death-dealing inventions! Yours is the greater force! Consider only this,—that a holy cause confronts a huge and many-tongued intruder, who will, if not driven back, despoil us of our homes."

When he had concluded, the Righteous Defenders again bowed, and marched around the building, placing incense-sticks before each mystic shrine; then passed out in single file to the place assigned them for the night.

Poor Ting Ho, the son to whom his father looked for support in his declining years was even now fading from sight. Ignorant of the outer world, and with the superstitions of his ancestors strong upon him, he fearlessly took up his country's cause, depending upon the spirits of his ancestors to protect him against an enemy equipped with modern shot and shell.

For a few days the women worked busily to prepare such articles as would be of use to the men on their march; money was contributed, and a few old guns were collected. Ah Moy's willing hands helped with the clothing and other accessories of the soldier's kit, and then she stood with the married women and watched her betrothed march away.

A few tears shed in solitude, a little poem to commemorate the heroism of Ting Ho, and a perceptible shadow in her dark eyes, were all that told the story of the third daughter's wedding, for she was too well-grounded in

Chinese etiquette to exhibit any outward signs of grief or sorrow.*

"Duty," she said to her father, "is the first law of Buddha, and I am content to leave events with heaven."

She had not even been permitted to feel the thrill of her lover's hand, as he passed her father's gate to join the main army, which lay two hundred miles away.

* In the literature of China, heroines are seldom depicted as charmers of men, or as languishing for love, but rather as obedient daughters who are willing to sacrifice their lives for duty.



VIII

AFTER the excitement attendant upon the uprising of the Righteous Defenders was over, Ching Fo turned his attention to the drouth, which was now bearing down upon him with all the fury of an angry god. He consulted an astrologer and learned from him that the planets prognosticated plagues, and other occurrences, which bring distress upon men. This so alarmed him that he lighted fires of camomile and wormwood before his house, and contributed much of his reserve supplies to the poor. He looked anxiously upon his wife and third daughter, knowing full well that if they should be obliged to flee to a more favorable locality their crippled feet would place them at a great disadvantage. In this state of anxiety a month slipped away, but still there was no rain. The priests, seeing the need of assuaging the fears of the people, had appointed a festival to the rain god. Ah Moy's nimble fingers were the first to begin sewing together the many-colored pieces of silk with which to honor the great Dragon. This work occupied the women of the neighborhood for several days. When all was ready, a party of coolies came down the hill bearing an odd skeleton, made of hoops and bamboo and pumpkin eyes, over which the silken skin was drawn. From the godown Ching Fo brought paint: red, green, and yellow, with which to touch claws and eyes and gills, and when it was finished the rain Dragon was one riotous glare of color.

As the pious laborers raised it to their shoulders, Ah Moy felt sure that the drouth would now be broken, but

although the festival lasted several days, no sign of rain appeared, and the priests decided upon a crusade through the famine-stricken district. To this pilgrimage Ching Fo contributed his much-beloved son, who, with two hundred other lads, repaired to the temple to pray and scourge themselves in preparation for the event. They wore ashen-colored garments, fastened with yellow sashes, in the ends of which were points of iron, to strike against their legs and keep the wounds already made open and bleeding. Incense and magnificent banners of silk and gold were carried before the procession, and their entrance into each village was welcomed by the ringing of bells and the burning of paper money. As they passed from place to place, the people vied with each other in works of charity and good-will; gold and precious stones were contributed to the priests in such quantity that they became a burden. For forty days the crusaders kept moving throughout the province, praying and casting out devils; but the sky remained as blue and the sun shone as fiercely as when they started.

The question of food along their line of march was already acute, and the stench of dead bodies arose from many houses. The scarcity of water was augmented by reports that some of the springs had been poisoned, and, taking it all in all, the crusade was abandoned.

By this time Ching Fo's estate had suffered greatly, from the horde of Righteous Defenders, who, unfed, unpaid, but strong in the faith that it was their mission to save China, went swarming over the land, consuming whatsoever they could find to support life.

Ah Moy waited in primitive fashion for news of her lover,—but she had no possible means of knowing what had befallen him. Stories of the awful instruments of destruction that the foreign devils knew how to use, some-

times reached her ears, and stories of battles, in which many of the defenders had been killed, crept from house to house.

In this way, the days slipped by, and still there were no signs of rain. Time and time again, had Ching Fo yielded up the food that he had reserved for his own family, and time and time again had he divided his supplies with his suffering neighbors, until now he was convinced that, in order to save the lives of his wife and children he must flee from his famine-stricken home. To do so, the open road was his only resort. The water in the creek was too low to admit of using a boat; his money was gone and his servants had long since been permitted to scatter, in order, if possible, to save themselves from starvation.

His son had returned from the crusade discouraged and suspicious, and everything seemed to indicate that great trouble was in store for Ching Fo and his family. In the rarefied air, the mirage shimmered in horrid mockery of water, and the softest gauze lay fairy-like over the gaunt wolf of hunger and despair.

The father now called his wife and explained to her that their only hope was to flee from their home and go out in search of a more favored locality.

"Most of our neighbors have already gone," he said, "and it is hoping against hope for us to remain here longer, so now I command you to prepare for the journey. Gather into bundles a change of raiment and a few utensils for cooking, and let us start as soon as possible."

No time was left to ponder over the case, for "He who feeds the ravens" had not fed them that morning. It was a trying hour for Ching Fo, for he saw not only his starving family, but he felt what unsuspected dens of doubt

were lurking in his own heart. As he beheld the scene of desolation about him, there seemed to him no God, no justice, no hope. Neither the young nor the old, neither the brave nor the beautiful, were spared, and he questioned how worthy of worship was He who permitted such things to be. Ah Moy noticed the agony in her father's face and clasped him in her arms, while, for one brief moment, their tears mingled.

Ching Fo clothed himself for the journey in a heavy silk tunic, with strong linen trousers. Under the tunic he buckled a girdle to which was attached his tobacco pouch and a pocket for money, both of which were pathetically empty. On his right side, in a leather shield, he fastened a knife, which was a family heirloom. Could it have spoken, it might have told of savage heroism practised in the past,—a heroism that feared not to spill blood, if occasion required it. Even little Ah Moy knew the etiquette of the Oriental suicide down to its minutest detail.

Ching Fo drew the knife from its case and tested its edge, and, as he did so, there came into his face an expression of great firmness. At this moment, his son, dressed for the journey, entered and took his place beside his father, and, when the women came, they were ready for the start.

With lowered head, as one who sees not, but goes forward only because he must, Ching Fo turned into the path which led toward the old King Shang monastery. Leading his family out of a famine-stricken province, with no recourse to modern methods, was a repetition of what his ancestors had done in generations long since dead. And so Ching Fo wished it to continue. Steam and electricity he regarded as innovations not for a moment to be considered. Along the creeks in their little boats, when the

water was sufficient, in the open road when dust and drouth came, were the methods which best suited this son of an Oriental civilization.

"We will make straight for the King Shang," he said to his wife, "and from there we may hope to start better prepared for our flight."

"How far is it to the King Shang?" asked his son.

"At least ten miles; but with patience we may reach it to-day," replied the father.

"My feet are strong from having gone with the crusaders; but, father, can mother and Ah Moy walk so far?"

"It is hard," replied his father, "but it is a case of necessity. Left here, they would die of hunger, or perhaps the foreign soldiers might find them, in which case no true Chinese woman would be willing to live."

"Oh, father, let us wait! Already mother and sister are far behind," exclaimed the son, looking anxiously back.

"We will go to yonder wall," said Ching Fo, "for just there I see an old bamboo tree, at the roots of which there may be young shoots. If we should be so fortunate as to find some, they will relieve us of hunger and give us new strength."

The two quickened their pace under the inspiration of a light breakfast, and were rewarded by finding a number of young shoots that were tender and delicious.

Ching Fo threw the bundle from his back and took from it a small kettle, into which he put the sprouts, and by the time the mother and daughter came up, he had ready a light repast. It was a spare breakfast, after a long walk; but it gave them courage to go on and to trust Ten Wang to bring them safely to the end of the day.

Refreshed by the food, Ah Moy and her mother pressed forward through the burning sand in a brave effort to keep up with the men. They spoke but little, but, hand in



“ Buzzards in solemn inquest.”

hand, faced hardships that would discourage less courageous spirits. As the sun grew hotter, they suffered terribly with their feet, but in their faces was the look of stolid endurance, which is so characteristic of the Chinese woman.

Occasionally the little party fell in with some one going their way, but for the most part the country was deserted. Starving dogs glared at them as they passed, and buzzards sat in solemn inquest over the bleaching bones of the victims of the drouth. So the day passed, and as the mists of evening began to gather over the distant mountains, the old monastery came in sight. Ching Fo's trained eye was the first to catch the outline of the noble building, as it loomed grandly against a low range of foothills.

"Blessed be Buddha!" he exclaimed, turning to his wife. As he glanced back, he saw that Ah Moy was pale and trembling, and that a tear had left its mark in the dust on her cheek. The sight of their goal, however, encouraged her, and she made renewed efforts to keep pace with the rest. In fancy she saw Quan Yin (goddess of mercy), and in fancy she heard the bells calling to evening prayer. In this sweet attitude of mind, she bore her sufferings until they all stood together on the stone steps of the old King Shang.

"Blessed be Buddha!" again exclaimed the father, and all the family repeated the sacred text. When they had rested for a few moments they entered the heavily-timbered gateway and passed into an avenue lined with long rows of stone lanterns, which led to a small temple, and thence to a priest's house. Ching Fo was surprised to observe that the saucers for oil in the lanterns were empty, and his hand trembled as he struck the old bronze bell. An aged priest opened the door, and Ching Fo asked with great

courtesy whether it would be possible for him and his family to remain within the walls for a few days.

The priest raised his hand in token of welcome, and then took down a bunch of keys from which he selected one and led the way back to the monastery. As he opened the door, Ching Fo was horrified to see that the "Merciful Hearer of Prayers" lay face downward on the floor, and, further on, the Dragon, so lately carried by the pious laborers, lay broken and with great patches of its silken skin cut away by sacreligious hands. These sights sent a thrill of terror, such as he had never before felt, through his heart. He turned back and with a gesture of despair said to his wife:

"Nothing but desolation is here," then, turning to the old priest, he asked "what in the name of heaven had caused this ruin?"

"The building has been looted by the foreign soldiers," replied the priest, "and everything of value has been carried off."

"Is there no rice?" asked the son piteously.

"A small portion of rice," answered the priest, "shall be yours, but beyond that our shelves are empty."

The priest then returned to his quarters, and with his own hands prepared a bowl of rice for each member of the family. While he was gone, Ching Fo explored a little further into the building and found that all the idols had been more or less mutilated, and that much that was sacred had been carried off by the pillagers. After the priest had returned and they had eaten their portion of rice, they gathered a hard pillow from the fragments about them and lay down to await another day. The sun went down in one wild welter of color. Its golden rays crept through the windows and tinted the walls of the old monastery with the richest of hues, while the

“Firefly lovers flew over the wall
Through the dim, pathless air, to a firefly ball.”

But the beauties of nature, which, at another time, would have given Ching Fo and his family intense pleasure, were now lost in the sadness of their thoughts. Hour after hour they remained awake, trying to grasp the meaning of the woes that had befallen them. At last the children sank into the sleep of the tired young, but into Ching Fo's wide open eyes there came forerunners of the darkest hour he had yet seen.

Before him was the parting of the ways. His son, the protector of the family tombs and the successor to his family name — on the one side, while on the other was Ah Moy, the idol of his heart. Between these two he must now choose. It was not a question for a Chinaman to ponder long over, for with the money he might receive for his third daughter, he could remove his wife and son to a place of safety; and when the Rain God saw fit to pour out a sufficient quantity of water upon his parched fields, he could return to his home and continue the family worship.

He knew that when famine held its deadly sway the slave dealer was sure to come to purchase the fairest girls, and he thought in the agony of his heart, that Ah Moy ought to bring a large sum of money. She was old enough to be immediately available for a wife; the danger of foot-binding was past; her education was properly finished, and, what was more, she was very beautiful. These were the thoughts that haunted the father and drove every possible chance of sleep from his eyes, so he arose and went out into the moonlit garden.

In the gray of the morning his wife joined him and there, beneath the trees made sacred by the worship of ages, that grand committee of two, the father and mother,

unfolded to each other the plan by which they hoped to save the family shrine.

"To sell the third daughter," said Ching Fo to his wife, "is, indeed, a trial; but I fear that to all our other woes this intolerable one must be added. The straits into which Ten Wang has brought us compel me to entertain the thought."

"I knew it before your honorable speech was made," replied his wife. "If it must be so, it must be so, and the details are left for you to work out. Are there slave dealers in this vicinity?" she asked sadly.

"I presume there are. They usually swarm about places where men in financial distress are to be found."

"But what if Ting Ho, the son of Sing Lee, should return?"

"There is but little hope of such an event; for during all the time that he has been gone, his father has heard nothing from him," replied Ching Fo.

A long conversation followed, during which neither uttered a sigh nor shed a tear. But the deep sorrow they were enduring bowed their heads and furrowed their brows. When the sun again came in stately splendor over the mountain crest, they turned their faces eastward, hoping that the spiritual enlightenment which come with the early morning, might make the poor world-fret seem a little less heavy. After inhaling deeply, Ching Fo arose and went into the monastery to see Ah Moy and determine whether her young heart would be able to bear up under the ordeal of parting from her family.



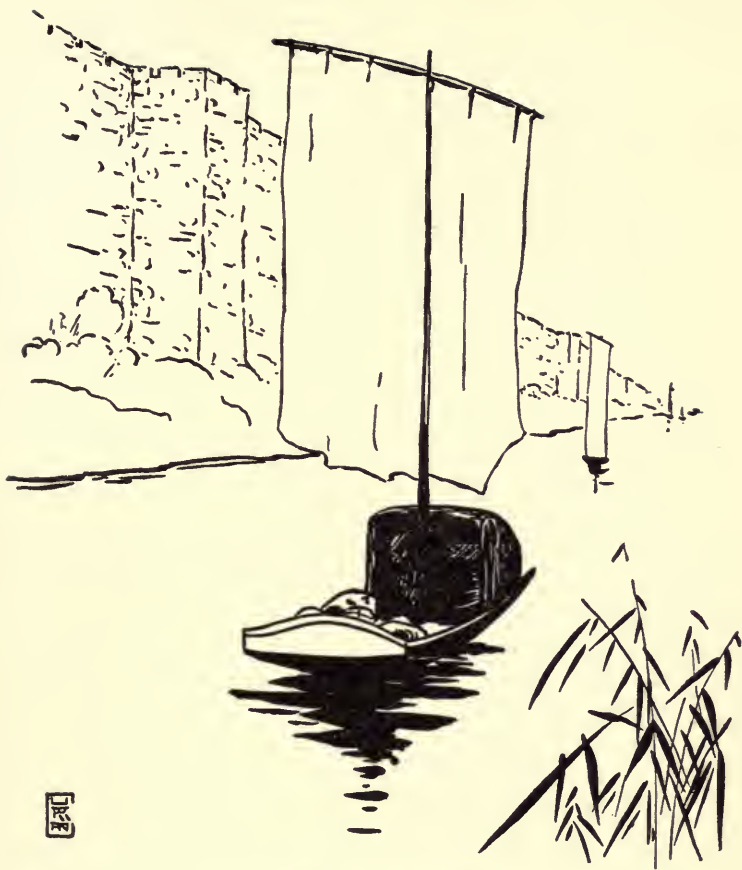
IX

WITH slow and faltering step, Ching Fo approached his daughter, whom he found seated upon a bench at the side of the monastery. When he reached the spot, he laid his hand almost reverently upon her head, and said, with painful emotion.

“Daughter, all my life I have revered the gods and have believed in the spirits of my ancestors. Yet, at this moment, I can see but one malicious monster ruling the world. Driven by his evil hand, I am compelled to say that while thou art my beloved daughter, and thy mother and I bless the day that thou didst enter our unworthy home, I see no other way to tide over the distress into which we have fallen than to sell thee to a slave-dealer. I have not the right to cut off my family line while a female child can be used to bridge over the dilemma. The question that confronts me now is that of saving my son and the ancestral line.

“There are three things of which a superior man stands in awe: first, he stands in awe of the ordinances of heaven; second, he stands in awe of the words of the sages; third, he stands in awe of the customs of his ancestors. All these things compel me to protect my family shrine. To do so, thy brother must receive the first consideration. It is to him that we look for the preservation of the family tombs; it is to him that the spirits of our ancestors look for the perpetuation of the family name.”

Thus spoke Ching Fo, and right royally did his little daughter answer him:



A sail outside the wall.

"Father, dear, do not look so sad! I know that, having been born a girl, I am only a burden in such a time as this, and whatever you think best, I will willingly accede to. It is ordained by the gods that women shall be slaves, and I may as well obey a master as to obey the mother-in-law, to whom I should owe my services had I been married to Ting Ho. Do not worry about me, for I shall go willingly into the slave-dealer's hands, if you so decide. I know that you can get money enough for me to care for mother and brother until the rain comes, and then you can go back to the old home and live long."

The courageous spirit of his daughter saved Ching Fo much of the sting which the interview would otherwise have given him. He took her hand and together they went to the mother, who was waiting for them beneath the tree. For one sad hour all three sat with faces to the east, enduring silently the sorrow that had come to them.

In the still air, they could hear voices outside the wall, and could see the top of a sail, which they knew must belong to some houseboat; but they were too much absorbed in their own affairs to wish to see strangers, so they went quietly back into the monastery and began to fold the garments they had worn during the night. When they had finished, Ah Moy said, pointing to the idols, "Father dear, may we not go around the room and repair some of the damage that has been done to the images before we go?"

"Yes," replied Ching Fo, "it is proper to do what you can to that end. The damage done by a barbarian may be repaired by a woman's hand; but the barbarian is an object of contempt."

There was bitterness in his voice, such as Ah Moy had seldom noticed before. She hesitated a little, but finally said to her mother: "Shall we raise up the blessed

Buddha?" "Yes," faltered the wife of Ching Fo, "we can hardly go away without adding a little to the restoration of the place." They raised the Buddha and then passed over to the virgin mother. The lily was still in her hand, but her face was turned to the wall, and the child which had lain on her breast, had been placed beside the God of War. Ah Moy could not restrain her tears. "Tell me, oh, tell me, mother," she said, "why it is that foreign people treat our sacred symbols with such contempt?"

"I cannot answer, my daughter. All we can do is to bring the infant back and stand it beside its mother."

They turned the face of the Virgin about and carried back the child and were proceeding to the God of a Thousand Hands, when they heard the voice of Ching Fo calling then.

"We must go now, for it will be much easier if we walk before the heat of the day."

Thus commanded, the women left the broken idols and prepared to start.

The son, although he had lost some of the buoyancy of the previous day, took his place beside the father and all was ready for the day's journey then, suddenly a shadow darkened the doorway and caused them to turn in that direction. There they saw a Chinaman sleek, well-fed, and wearing the regulation suit of black linen that proclaimed him to be of the merchant class. He shook his own hands as he advanced and bowed ceremoniously low.

"Like yourself, honored sir, I am a visitor to this noble temple," he said, and, as he spoke, he cast a searching glance at Ah Moy, which so angered Ching Fo that he replied with freezing politeness:

"The temple is before you, sir," and immediately passed on. Seeing that the little party intended no further con-

versation, the newcomer, still looking at Ah Moy, said:

"Honored sir, you seem weary and travel-stained. May I ask from whence you come and whither you go?"

"We have come from the Tien Dong and we go to the Shan Tung province," was Ching Fo's terse answer.

"Your locality has suffered much," said the stranger, "our country is beloved by the gods, if we may believe that old saw about the gods persecuting whom they love."

"The gods," replied Ching Fo, "are far beyond us. All we can do is to follow a line of duty and leave events with heaven."

"Yes, yes," assented the merchant. "It is futile to attempt to pacify the gods. It is very sad, however, to see the ruin which sacreligious hands have wrought in this grand old monastery."

"Yes, oh, yes," Ching Fo answered warmly, "I know that the day has not yet come for the brotherhood of men, but it does seem that nations might abstain from highway robbery in adjusting their differences."

"Yes," agreed the stranger, "the despoiling of this place was entirely unnecessary, and was carried out with the savagery of the grimy barbarian."

"How so?" asked Ching Fo, relaxing his cold demeanor and showing a keen interest in what the stranger had to say.

"I chanced to be near here, and, in a measure, to be a witness of the fiendish work. My houseboat was moored just below in the creek, when a party of foreigners surrounded me and demanded any information I might have concerning the treasure in the building."

"Ah, indeed! Then you were really a witness."

"Yes; as I said, chancing to speak a little 'pidgin' I was put upon for information. Of course, my knowledge of English failed me and I answered all questions with 'no

savee,' but they were bent upon mischief and — this is the result. The priests," he went on, "were powerless, and as their supply of food was limited, they fled to the temple of Ko Shin."

"It is deplorable," remarked Ching Fo, and again attempted to throw the bundle containing the family possessions over his shoulder.

"Are you properly equipped for your long walk?" asked the stranger. "I have provisions, and to spare, in my boat. They are yours, if you will accept them."

At this Ching Fo softened his manner a little and asked, "To whom am I indebted for this kindness?"

"I am Quong Lung," replied the merchant, "and it will give me pleasure to serve so noble a brother."

The faces of the little party brightened, for although they courted hardship, and took a keen delight in testing their powers of endurance, their sufferings had already gone to a point where the ancient spirit threatened to give way.

Quong Lung, seeing that they were willing to accept his proffered food, clapped his hands in signal for a servant to come from the boat. In a moment two coolies presented themselves and their master instructed them to bring abundantly from the houseboat kitchen. The coolies hastened back and soon returned with bountiful supplies.

By this time, Ching Fo suspected that his benefactor was a slave-dealer who had followed him for the purpose of taking advantage of his distress.

But as he saw the wasted figures of his wife and children, he threw aside his scruples and squatted with them before a large platter of rice.

This was what Quong Lung had hoped for, since he was a shrewd enough judge of human nature to know that business progresses better on a full stomach than on an

empty one. He had the Chinaman's patience and the Chinaman's superstition, and while he waited for the family to finish eating, he loitered among the idols and lighted incense-sticks or threw wads of paper at the God of Good Luck. After the meal was over, Ching Fo's tobacco pouch was filled, for the first time in many weeks; water chestnuts were brought in from the boat, and, later, tea, rice wafers, and sweets were presented.

Before the meal was over, the slave-dealer joined the group and for half an hour tried to adjust himself to their society. As the sun crept up and stood directly over the old Cryptomeria tree, the two men strolled out and sat down beneath it. The sunshine glinted through the boughs and the insects droned the music that the Chinese love; but in the shadow beneath the tree sat a shrewd and prosperous merchant eating out the heart of a helpless scholar. With the cunning of a Jew, Quong Lung beat off the shock which he knew would be given Ching Fo, if he boldly opened negotiations for Ah Moy. He talked about the drouth, the chances of rain and the foreign devils; but did not mention the girl, until the shadow of the tree stretched far toward the east. At last he said significantly:—

Your daughter is a very beautiful girl. I wonder you have not married her before now."

"She has been betrothed since her babyhood to a son of Sing Lee," answered Ching Fo, "but, alas, her intended husband has been sacrificed on the altar of his country."

"Well, then, it is no more than proper that she should be given to another. I have much demand for girls who are of marriageable age. Is your daughter's health good?"

"Her health is excellent," replied the father, "my family has been subjected to great hardship since the drouth

commenced, and the girl looks a little thin ; but with proper food she will soon regain her flesh."

"Yes, probably so," assented Quong Lung, "but you know that some girls grow ill and faded when taken away from their parents. All things combine to make investment in girls uncertain. If I could be sure of finding a purchaser for her very soon, I should be glad to offer you a liberal price, but, taking everything into consideration, I cannot afford to pay more than five hundred taels for her."

"She is no coolie," exclaimed the father, angrily, "that is no more than the price of a common coolie! This is the daughter of Ching Fo, whose name is known and honored throughout the province. It is only because the iron hand of necessity is upon me that I consider her sale at any price. I have but one son, kind sir, and it is my duty to protect him at whatever cost. You are certainly aware that such girls as my Ah Moy are only to be purchased in times of distress.

Quong Lung was callous to the matter of sentiment, however. He wanted to buy the girl, but he wanted her at the lowest possible price. So he replied very carelessly:

"Oh, very well,—there are many girls for sale, and my experience is that they are usually only consumers of rice."

Every word of this haggling over the price was as iron driven into the soul of Ching Fo. He knew that the color would come back to the cheek of Ah Moy as soon as she had plenty of food, and that, under favorable circumstances, she was very beautiful and could be resold at a high price as soon as a favorable locality was reached.

"What is the good man and the just,
Oftimes a pearl that none doth prize,

Or jewel rare which men account
A common pebble and dispise.
Set forth upon the world's bazaar,
It mildly gleams, but no one buys."

quoted Ching Fo from an old poem.

Brooding thus over his troubles, Ching Fo let the day go by, and when it was nearly dark returned to the monastery. His wife and his daughter came and sat beside him in silence, and the stars were twinkling before the family lay down upon the hard floor to spend another night. But when a new day formed in the east, Ching Fo faced it with the courage of a man who has gone through the deep waters and found a landing-place on the other side. He arose, walked firmly to the bank of the creek, and motioned Quong Lung to his side.

"It is useless to prolong the agony," he said, "neither my family nor myself can see any other way of escape, and it were better that we close the cruel transaction."

Thus ended the bargaining, and thus the daughter of Ching Fo became the property of Quong Lung. The contract was drawn up by the slave-dealer, and so cunningly worded was it that Ching Fo did not notice at first the omission of the usual clause which provides that the slave shall not be sold for immoral purposes. When he saw the defect, his blood boiled anew, but he dared not expostulate, lest Quong Lung should take advantage and reduce the price, which was now barely sufficient to enable him to take his family out of the drouth-stricken province.

Under these circumstances, he signed the document, and returned to the monastery to inform the women, and to say a last word to his third daughter, from whom he now expected to be parted forever. Both women knew by the expression on his face that the moment had come, and both

struggled bravely to conceal their emotions. Ching Fo's step, as he advanced to take Ah Moy by the hand and lead her to the door where Quong Lung was waiting to receive her, was that of a man grown old in a single night.

"My child," said he, "you must go with Quong Lung and obey him, and be as good a slave as you have been a daughter. The most painful part of the whole matter is that I have not been able to secure the usual clause in the contract of sale to protect you from dishonor. It is customary for the Chinese slave-dealer to sell his young women for wives, and it is most likely that some good Chinaman will buy you, to raise sons to his ancestral line; but, daughter, there is a possibility that it may not be so, and if it comes to a choice between shame and death—you must choose only death."

Saying this, he took from his girdle the knife which he so valued as a family possession and handed it to her. Ah Moy understood, and, without hesitancy, took the knife and hid it in her sleeve. Then she followed her father to the door, where Quong Lung received her, both parents turning their faces to the wall as she was led down the steps.

Ah Moy bore up bravely until she reached the plank which led from the bank to the boat, but then overwhelming sorrow swept over her and she broke into a fit of weeping.

"It is another cry-baby that he has bought," grumbled one of the oarsmen, glancing at the distracted child. But Quong Lung spoke kindly to her, saying:—

"Do not cry, little one. Perhaps I shall sell you to a rich mandarin, who will give you plenty of clothes and make you a great lady."

But the third daughter of Ching Fo was too unhappy to be elated at such a suggestion. To her excited imagin-

ation, Quong Lung looked as pitiless as did the God of War in the monastery. She soon recovered her composure, however, and true to her Asiatic training, sat down and waited patiently for whatsoever might be the next step in her new life.



ALTHOUGH the house-boat of Quong Lung was built after the fashion of a thousand years ago, it was staunch and strong. Over the centre were ribs of bamboo, upon which was stretched heavy canvas, and, higher up, like the wings of a great bird, was a sail covered all over with idiographs representing the aphorisms of the sages. There were comfortable bunks and well-filled cupboards in this land and water caravansary, and, in a strong box beneath Quong Lung's bed, was opium, tobacco, and bottles with foreign labels on them, for the slave-dealer had lived in San Francisco. On a shelf against the side of the cabin was an image of the river god, in front of which was a bowl of ashes, showing that incense had been burned there. Beside the fragment incense less pleasant smells reeked to heaven — bilge water, dried fish, and sea-cabbage. Sometimes the black smoke was added, but this was only when the boat was stuck fast in the mud, for Quong Lung did not let pleasure interfere with business. On the bow of the boat was painted an enormous eye. What it meant, Quong Lung did not know, but it was a good luck sign, and he believed in having the good luck signs wherever they belonged. For the three-toed dragon he kept a cup of tea and a bronze gong, each clang of which was a signal for an offering and a prayer. At the stern of the boat was a great, bent-handled sculling oar, which was manipulated by coolies stripped to the waist. On occasions when the water was low, however, the crew jumped overboard

and pulled like horses. The foreman differed not from the rest, except that he wore a shirt, and stood on top of the bamboo frame, uttering such words as civilized men use only toward their horses when the wagon is stuck in the mud. He also shouted warnings to other boatmen:

"Don't you see this fine boat, all you little mud-scrapers? Get to one side or I will run you down. Hey there! thou son of a louse, clear the way," and so on. His ability to intimidate the small-fry constituted his chief value as an overseer. With it he could arouse the multitude that swarmed upon the water, and thus get room for his boat. After his work was done, however, this indefatigable foreman squatted upon terms of perfect equality with the rest of the crew around a bowl of fish and rice. Quong Lung commanded better food — such as pork, and lily bulbs, preserved ginger, and dainties kept under the bed.

Ah Moy soon got over her fright and was timidly preparing to eat the food which the cook had sent her, when, to her surprise, another girl rolled out of a bunk and came and sat down by her side. She was a pretty girl with a suspicion of waves in her black hair, and with eyes that looked straight into the faces of men. All the girls whom Ah Moy had ever known had been taught to abstain from raising the eyes above the third button of the blouse, and she suspected at once that there was something wrong about her young companion. Another curious trait of this strange-looking girl was her restlessness. Ah Moy, in her secluded life, had met only girls of studied repose and passionlessness.

It was a sad awakening for Ah Moy to find herself in comradeship with one who bore none of the marks of the society to which she had been accustomed; and at first she felt a strange reluctance about accepting the situation.

Happily, however, the two girls spoke the same dialect, which fact made it impossible for them to go on without such friendship as springs from mutual sorrow. After a few days, the girl confided to Ah Moy that her name was Wing, and that her father was an American. During a period of drouth, she said, her mother had been sold for money, to keep the other members of the family alive; and to tide over a period when wives were scarce the American had bought her and installed her as mistress of his house. As a slave she served him faithfully and bore him a daughter, but when his wife came in a great ship from San Francisco she had carried him off to a fine house on a fashionable street in Shanghai and they saw him no more. In due time, Wing's mother found her way back to the parental roof, but as no one wanted the half-breed child, she had been given to an old woman, who raised her as a servant. All this pitiful tale Wing told between hysterical burst of weeping. Her manner astonished Ah Moy even more than her story did, for demonstrations of grief she had seldom witnessed. Ah Moy soothed the girl and combed the tangles out of her unkempt hair, telling her at the same time about Kali,* the mythical mother, who tears the hearts of her children only to prepare them for her blessing.

Wing could remember her father, and sometimes told Ah Moy stories of his wealth, which to her childish mind seemed fabulous. She often expressed a desire to find him and to live among his people, even perhaps to marry a foreigner. These sentiments of the half-breed were distressing to Ah Moy, and she concluded that Wing's heart was a sepulchre haunted by phantoms of which a true Chinese girl could conceive only in the vaguest way.

* Kali is a hideous blue idol, who stands with a drawn sword in her hand, while with her feet she tramples upon her children.

"Tell me, dear Wing, said Ah Moy one day, "why you talk about man and money?"

"Oh," replied Wing, "is it not nice to have riches and lovers?"

"I think not," returned Ah Moy, "these are strange subjects which I cannot understand. Marriage seems to me to be a duty, for the performance of which the parents will make arrangements in due time, and any love not sanctioned by their wish or any love in which the mother-in-law is not entitled to the services of the daughter-in-law, is to me a puzzling enigma."

"Then," said Wing piteously, "it must be the foreign part of me that thinks wrong. My mother used to say to me, "Wing, you belong to another race; or, Wing, what strange ideas you have."

To Ah Moy, the subject of heredity was a sealed book, but she was conscious that between herself and Wing was an impassable gulf, that grew wider as they ate and drank and slept together. This caused her deep sorrow, for the circumstances under which they were living made her feel a strong desire to be of service to her slave-girl companion. How to accomplish her object, however, was a problem that Ah Moy's young mind had no way of solving.

Wing felt the cloud that hung over her and made pathetic attempts to overcome the peculiarities that Ah Moy pointed out to her; but she was burdened with impulses that swayed her, even as the wind sways a young and tender plant. Quong Lung understood full well the handicap under which Wing labored, and felt a strong dislike for her. "She is a typical Eurasian," said he one day to Ah Moy. "The good is burned out of her, and nothing is left but the ashes of sensuality. I bought her for a trifle, and hope to get rid of her as soon as we reach a market."

The boat had now worried along through the shallow

waters of the creek and was in a river with a strong current to the south. A few days more would bring them to Shanghai. There Quong Lung hoped to dispose of his cargo and then return to the famine district for other chattels. Wind and weather favored; the girls were well-fed and everything about them a miracle of beauty, and, except for an occasional pang when they thought of home, they were quite happy. At times the boat lay in shadowy depths, where fish darted gracefully through the water; at other times strange birds arose with a whirr of wings, only to drop down again when the first alarm had subsided. Along the banks were huddled houses, with no visible way of approach. Tall bamboos swayed gracefully about them and crooked paths led to shrines higher up.

In places acres and acres of duck covered the water, while the Chinese husbandman, sitting idly upon the bank, herded them, much as the western man herds his flocks. Sometimes, as the houseboat came plowing into sight, a shrill whistle from their owners sent the ducks scrambling on to a large raft near by, where they sat demurely waiting until the danger was past.



Again they saw boat-loads of coffined dead, being carried to their ancestral tombs. Accompanying each party were hired mourners, and priests whose yellow robes were dabbled with mud. Upon one occasion, a fleet of tiny straw boats covered the water.

"I must tell you about this funeral ceremony," said Quong Lung, as they watched the little boats float by.

"Oh do," exclaimed the girls, "for this is the most interesting sight we have seen yet."

"Well then," replied Quong Lung, "Hong Fang, who gives this celebration in honor of his mother, is a man of great wealth. He has devoted so much time to spiritual attainment that he is able to see his mother, who has been dead for many years. Often he sits alone in dusk of the evening and lights the spirit-recalling incense, and slowly her face takes shape and hovers in the smoke; but the time is nearly ripe when her spirit must go into another sphere, and she will no longer be able to command the forces by which she materializes; so he gives her this grand celebration, known throughout China as the 'Ceremony of Farewell.'"

"Oh," said Ah Moy, "I have often heard my father speak of this festival and call it one of the most beautiful known in China. Is there not a written message in each little boat?"

"Yes, in each little boat there is a scrap of paper, folded with ceremonious precision, upon which is written a message of farewell."

Saying this, Quong Lung reached out with a bamboo pole and hooked up one of the tiny craft for the girls to examine. They were greatly interested and unfolded the message which was addressed to "The honorable the Emperor of the Dead." Inside the paper was written, "On behalf of my mother, greeting and much joy." Ah Moy,

as soon as she had read it, creased it back into the original folds and asked Quong Long to set it afloat again, saying, in gentle tones,

"It might grieve the spirit-mother to lose even this one message.

For hours the little boats covered the water with their twinkling lights, but by morning they had all drifted away, and instead of a funeral cortège, the girls now saw some rafts, composed of bamboo poles, upon which sat cormorants, looking solemnly into the water.

"Only see the cruel rings around their necks," exclaimed Ah Moy, as the birds twisted their heads in an attempt to throw off the burden.

"The rings are to keep them from swallowing the fish they catch," explained Quong Lung, "there would be no profit in keeping them, if they did not give up what they take."

"Do they swim under water?" asked Ah Moy.

"Yes," answered Quong Lung, smiling, "I see you are fishing for another story."

"I should like to know more about the queer birds," replied Ah Moy, with a look of interest in her face.

"The cormorant, as you see, is used by the very poorest class of fishermen; a few bamboo poles, strapped together, and three or four cormorants, tied by a string, constitute his stock in trade. With these, and a basket to put his fish in, he is ready for business. The birds are trained so well that at a signal from their master they glide noiselessly into the water and pursue fish and eels with great skill. Do you not see the flabby stomach?"

"That is a sack which holds more than you could believe, and, sometimes, the bird catches so much that it is full and running over — that is, it is stretched as tight as a drum, and the tail of the last fish protrudes from the bill of the

bird. A bird that does such work as that is worth five or six taels. See! there is one throwing a fish into the air!"

"Why does he do that?" the girls asked.

"Because he wishes to swallow it head first. If he catches a fish by the back, he throws it up, and, as it comes down, he takes it head first, else the bony fins might scratch his throat."

"But do tell us how these birds are caught," urged Ah Moy, still anxious for the story to continue.

"Oh that is easy! the eggs are found by people who deal in them and sell them to others who hatch them under hens. The old hen does not notice that the eggs are green, or that she is sitting a whole month instead of twenty-one days, but patiently clucks and waits until she feels the little ones squirming beneath her. Then the housewife takes the brood away, to be fed upon small pieces of fish. When they are two months old, their education begins. A string is tied around one leg and they are taken to the water, where small fish have been placed. They know very well how to catch the fish, but they have to be whipped with a bamboo switch many times before they will give them up. It takes many hard lessons before they can be trusted; but in time they learn to obey, and are then ready for four or five years of steady work. After that, they become sulky and are thrown into the water."

"I should not be willing to torture the poor birds so, just for a little money," said Ah Moy, with a perplexed expression.

"You are not accustomed to the ways of the world, little one," returned Quong Lung.

"No," replied Ah Moy, "I am only accustomed to the ways of my father."

But this small sally changed into a smile as she saw one

of the cormorants break his chain and fly, with a wild scream, to a beetling crag.

Two days more, and the boat anchored at the foot of a long flight of stairs, which led to the Azure Pagoda, where the one hundred and eight fires were lighted for the



The cormorants.

purpose of burning out the one hundred and eight foolish desires that afflict the children of men. As Quong Lung's cook felt the need of prostrating himself before the idols and leaving a small offering, the boat came to a standstill.

What the one hundred and eight foolish desires were, of which the cook wished to purge himself, was not very apparent, since his clothing consisted only of a pair of trousers and his food of rice and fish. Yet he religiously placed a copper coin in his ear and waded through the mud to the lion-guarded steps.

All the way up the path were pretty, patient mothers, carrying their babes to be purged of foolish desires. As the cook approached the sacred landing, an outstander informed him that he could not enter without more clothing. Nothing daunted, the religious cook returned to the boat and happily was able to borrow the foreman's shirt and hat. Thus equipped, he was allowed to enter the house of prayer. After prostrating himself three times before an image, and making all the genuflections required by etiquette, he repaired to the shrine of the God of the Aching Tooth; not that he had the toothache, but since he was there, he would appease the God, lest he send that painful malady upon him.*

It was before this idol without a jaw that the pious cook met some other boatmen, who invited him to a game of fan-tan behind the temple. The game was followed by the "black smoke," and in the wee, small hours of the night, the cook found himself so much in debt that he was obliged to pawn the foreman's hat and shirt and return to the boat without them. This arrangement was not satisfactory, either to the foreman or to Quong Lung, who gave the cook a beating, after which he resumed his work in the spirit of a man who has enjoyed a holiday.

Next day, the boat stopped before the temple of Yuen Ti, and the girls were anxious to hear something about

* It is said that in one of his incarnations, this God suffered so much from toothache that he tore off his jaw, and since that time he has had power over this ailment.

this building. Quong Lung told them the story of the empress Huang Fi, who, more than four thousand years before, raised silk worms, and was afterwards deified and worshipped under the name of Yuen Ti. So careful was she of her silk worms," said Quong Lung, "that she would not allow them to be frightened by noise, or disturbed by strangers coming into their presence. The empress fed them with her own hands, and would not permit a withered or dusty leaf to be given them. We do not know, now, whether she ate her pets, but the chrysalides are used as an article of diet among Chinese who can afford such luxuries." Both girls laughed at this story, and Quong Lung seemed as much pleased as they were.

So passed the days of floating and rowing, and as the girls were well-fed and contented they had greatly improved in appearance when the house-boat of Quong Lung entered the wilderness of small craft that swarmed in the vicinity of Shanghai. There was a gem-like brightness in the eyes of Ah Moy and warm red blood in her cheeks. The thought that she had saved her father's family from starvation gave her a consciousness that shone in her face and lightened her step. Many a day she pictured the old home, with the Rain God pouring water upon its parched fields, and the lamps again lighted upon its ancestral shrines. She was glad that she had been patient enough to listen to all of Wing's visionary conversation, and she looked with pride upon the tell-tale hair which she had trained to lie in neat coils at the side of the head.

The foreman now swore more than usual, and the crew drove the nose of Quong Lung's boat into the smallest opening; yet it was two days before they pulled up, and, amid the clatter and roar of an open port, the little party set their feet again upon solid ground.

A sheet of warm mist hung over Shanghai, protecting

the foliage from the burning sun, and making the gardens along the Bund glisten as though newly varnished. Foreigners from many countries were rushing through the streets and Ah Moy was quite frightened, for she had never before seen such hurry and confusion. As compared with the repose of her father and his friends, all these strangers seemed like madmen. Crews from the war-ships, clad in spotless uniforms, brushed past her, and porters wrangled about their fees.

"What has happened," Ah Moy said to Wing, "that all the people seem so excited?"

"I am trying to think," answered Wing; "it seems to me like a far-off dream; but I can remember how my mother used to say that the foreigners were always in a hurry."

"And they look so angry," said Ah Moy; "do they not keep the face?"

"No," replied Wing. "It seems like very long ago, but I think that part of me which is American belongs to this mad rush. Somehow I feel used to it already."

"And what are those red-turbaned men who walk up and down and carry knives and guns?" Ah Moy asked of Quong Lung.

"Oh, those are Sikhs. They do police duty. They are the men who capture young girls, if they attempt to run away," he explained shrewdly.



XI

QUONG LUNG did not give the girls time to look around; but hurried them into a rikisha and had them transported to a large building on the Nanking road. There he put them in charge of an old woman, named Wang. Wang was cross, and after looking them over with a critical eye said:—

“This is the time you have been cheated. Look at the feet of that girl” pointing to Ah Moy, “they are too small for a slave. Do you expect me to offer her my shoulder every time she moves?”

“Oh,” responded Quong Lung, “never mind, Wang. I will manage it. There are more ways than one to make money out of girls.”

“And why did you buy the Eurasian,” continued Wang, without heeding his answer, “you promised me that you would not buy any more half-breeds. The Chinamen will not have them for wives, and there is always danger of trouble if you sell them to the flower-boats. Now, what would happen if that girl’s father should claim her?”

“Why,” exclaimed Quong Lung, “it would probably happen that I should get some money. I have a plan —”

But here he stopped short and left Wang to surmise as best she could what his plan might be. Wang looked again at the pitiful figure of Wing and said:

“That kind are always getting sick. Do you suppose I have nothing to do but take care of sick Eurasians?”

However Wang might grumble, she had no alternative but to obey, so she took the girls to a large room and

locked them in. The windows were barred with iron rods, and the door swung on huge wooden hinges. Flaky, whitewash had once covered the walls, but it was now relieved by plentiful streaks of dirt. From a grease rimmed hole in the partition, a strip of cow-hide hung, the far end of which went beyond the wall, and was connected with a large fan that hung directly over Wang's bed. From the ceiling dangled women's clothing in all stages of wear and tear — the blue cotton of the coolie, the butterfly embroidered silk of the dancing girl, and the shiny black of the middle-class wife, hanging side by side.

Through the grated window the girls could look down upon throngs of people, who seemed moving in an endless procession. Wing watched eagerly the living stream, but Ah Moy's quick eye caught a view of the Yang-ste-kiang river, as it shimmered in the distance.

"How beautiful," she said. "Only see the silver thread with gray-green banks."

"No," replied Wing, "see the people below. Oh, If I could only get down and go with them!"

"But where would you go?" asked Ah Moy.

"Oh, just go. I feel a spirit within me that says 'go.'"

A pained expression crept into Ah Moy's face, but she made no reply. She had often observed the great gulf between Wing's thinking and her own, so she had ceased to wonder at it and felt only sorrow. In a short time, old Wang came in and very unceremoniously set both girls to work.

"Can you wind the silk from the cocoons?" asked she of Ah Moy. "It requires close attention, for I do not wish any of it spoiled."

So saying, she set down a basket filled with the dainty webs of the domestic silk-worm. To Wing she said:

"I will sleep. You may pull on the cowhide till I return, and remember I do not wish you to stop. If the flies disturb me so much the worse for you."

Both girls immediately obeyed. Although the reels were old and gummy, Ah Moy worked patiently until her task mistress reappeared, and Wing was still pulling at the rope when she opened the door. When old Wang saw this, she was quite repentant of the cross reception she had given them, and said:

"You may have some food, now, and after eating you may select articles from the rafters for your own wearing."

The girls ate their rice and mushrooms, and then pulled down such garments as they desired and put them on. Ah Moy chose a simple and unpretentious suit, but Wing transformed herself into a much bespangled young woman.

When Wang came back she found them at work on the silk and was so pleased with their gentle obedience that she gave them each a pair of slippers to wear.

As the days passed, Ah Moy won her way very near to the heart of the old woman, for she not only did her own work but frequently repaired the damage done by Wing's haste and impatience. By the end of the first week, the three women had adjusted themselves to one another in quite a home-like way.

Quong Lung had not been to see them in all this time.

"They are in safe hands," he said to a friend, "old Wang has had many years' experience with girls. If the drouth continues, I think I shall go back to Honan, for I can get girls there just now at my own price. The two, if kept at work, will earn their rice, while I collect another cargo."

"But can you sell them?" said Wu Lee. "There is both drouth and war in the air."

"That is an old story," replied Quong Lung, "war is always in the air. And as for the drouth, it is my best friend; it brings prices down;" but even while they were speaking there came blackness in the sky and the wind bellowed down the Nanking road; the gutters sent up noisome odors, and forked lightning darted through the clouds. Quong Lung scented the storm and went out on the street, only to see the sky black and the water falling in sheets upon the dry earth.

"I must look after my girls. This rain shapes my affairs in quite a new way. No more can I buy the daughters of the *literati* at my own price, and no more will I visit the province of Honan."

He tied his trousers around his ankles, let down his queue, which had been tucked in his blouse pocket, and turned his face toward the house where the slave girls were confined.

Old Wang knew how many tinkles of the bell meant Quong Lung, and she descended the stairs in haste to meet him. She reported that the girls were well and in suitable condition to sell.

"At your command, I will prepare them for the market," she said.

Quong Lung knew what she meant, and took from his pocket a gold piece with which to buy hair pins and bracelets and such other adornments as add to the attractions of womankind.

"Have them ready to-morrow," he directed; "I will bring some one to see them by ten o'clock."

Thus commanded, Wang began her preparations. She shaved their foreheads and combed their hair, plastering down with mucilage such tresses as showed signs of being unruly; she touched their eyebrows with black, turning them deftly to the shape of a willow leaf, while their lips



“A much be-spangled young lady.”

she brightened with vermilion. She pressed folds into their trousers, with as much precision as a tailor presses the garments of men. All the morning Wang fretted and fumed over their toilets, and, when her labors were ended, the girls looked very different from the timid, little wild flowers whom Quong Lung had bought.

At ten o'clock Quong Lung rang the bell, and a number of would-be purchasers followed at his heels. Most of them were Chinamen in search of wives. Among these Ah Moy was a prime favorite; but Quong Lung held his prize at a high figure.

"You cannot buy the daughter of a Ching Fo every day," he said to one merchant who offered five hundred taels for her.

"I can sell her any day in San Francisco for two thousand dollars," he declared and to other offers he replied, "No, no! I can do much better in San Francisco."

Two weeks passed in a fruitless attempt to dispose of the two girls. Then, one evening, as he was closing his house, Quong Lung said to old Wang,

"I believe I shall shape my affairs so as to make the trip to San Francisco."

"I told you so," replied old Wang, with true womanly instinct. "Ah Moy's feet are too small and Wing is only a consumer of rice. She will never bring the money you have invested in her; besides, she is not in good health, and may, at any time, become a burden."

"Well, then," said Quong Lung, "I may as well give it up. I can get something for her at the flower-boats, and then I can take Ah Moy to San Francisco and do well on her. But when I bought the half-breed I had a plan, which, had it worked as I expected, would have made the half-breed a profitable investment."

"You have hinted at your plan before," said Wang, a little piqued, "and I suppose I know what it is."

"I suppose you do," acknowledged he; "you are shrewd enough to see that if I could find the girl's father, I could make him pay well for her. But as I have failed in that, I think I will let go for what I can get, and trust to better luck in the future."


The next morning, Wang dressed Wing in the best the place afforded and set her down to await the arrival of Quong Lung. Adorned with jewelry and fine clothes, the perfume of sandal wood in her hair, and her olive skin set off with cheeks and lips of vermilion, she suited fairly well the requirements of the flower-boat.

But Quong Lung still regretted that he had missed finding her father, the white devil, who had come to China to get rich and left without giving the slave-dealer an opportunity to extort a share of his wealth. However, Quong Lung was not a man to cry over spilt milk. He came promptly to the house in the Nanking road, and, in a savage way, gave three tinkles at the bell, which brought old Wang to the door in double quick time.

"Is she ready?" he asked.

"Yes, she is ready, and she looks very pretty," replied Wang soothingly, for she saw that he was in a bad humor. Quong Lung took the half-breed girl by the hand and led her down the steps. She flung back a parting word to Ah Moy and seemed pleased that new scenes awaited her.

"A fragile child, from a home unblessed,
To be culled and worn on a sated breast,"



was poor little Wing, as she said good-bye to Ah Moy and followed Quong Lung like a lamb to the slaughter.

"Come this way," commanded he, "and try to behave like Ah Moy, or I shall not be able to sell you at all."

Just as he was about seating her in a rikisha a policeman tapped him on the shoulder and said, in very good English.

"A man wants to see you at the guild house, sir."

Quong Lung's face brightened. He felt that this might be the message for which he had waited in vain since his arrival in Shanghai,—the message which would tell him the whereabouts of the father of his slave.

He sent the girl back up stairs, and made haste to a building which was situated in an unsavory part of the city, known as the Foo Chow road. From the outside, nothing indicated what might be within; but the smells were those of Chinatown, and the guard at the door was of the Ho Wang company.

As Quong Lung entered, two men rose and bowed diplomatically low. Quong Lung shook his own hands and motioned them to a table; tea, tobacco and sam-shu came in courses. At last the tallest of the two men said:—

"Most honored friend, we have secured the information you desired concerning the father of the Eurasian girl, and we would know how much you are willing to pay us for our trouble."

"Is the testimony correct, beyond the peradventure of a doubt?" inquired Quong Lung.

"It is a transcript from the temple records," replied the first speaker; "I swear it will put you into communication with the father of the girl."

"I would pay something down, and more if the matter comes to a successful issue," ventured Quong Lung guardedly.

"We have searched over half the records in the province. We must have, at least, three hundred dollars."



"The water falling in sheets."

Quong Lung rattled some coin in his pocket, but beyond that made no reply. After a short time, the two men arose to go and Quong Lung, seeing that they intended no further parley, said:

"Come back to-morrow and I will see what can be done. The price is too high, but I will consider it."

Quong Lung had already exhausted his own ingenuity in search of the man who had bought Wing's mother and so cruelly deserted her, and he had been compelled to resort to the professional detective. These men he knew to be merciless in their demands for money, but they were now his only hope, and the delay of twenty-four hours was merely a strategic move that he might ascertain from old Wang a little more definitely the condition of Wing's health.

He walked back to the Nanking road and again rang the bell. Old Wang was in a communicative humor, and he had, on such occasions, no hesitancy in telling her the truth about his plans.

"I am in the way, he said, "to find the whereabouts of Wing's father and to get the information I wanted as to his finances. But I wish your opinion as to the state of her health; for it will not pay to spend any more money on her unless she is in tolerable condition. In other words, if she is likely to go to the white man's hell before I can get my hands on the father, I want to know it."

"Oh, no fear of that! I have had the care of girls for more than twenty years, and I should say, barring accidents, she will outlive Ah Moy. The foreigner's children do hold on to life unaccountably," she reassured him.

"Then," said Quong Lung, "you shall keep Wing for the present and say to anyone who calls that she is already sold. Help me now, Wang, and when I get my hand on

that fellow, we will both have more money than we have now. Good-bye!"

Next morning the trio met again at the guildhall, and Quong Lung dispensed tea with a liberal hand, but the two detectives reiterated their price of three hundred dollars for the information.

"It is exorbitant," protested the slave-dealer.

"But it is proportionate to the good; the child of the white devil is valuable when all the signs come right," urged the tall one.

An end to the parley came, however, and Quong Lung paid three hundred dollars for a piece of paper, on which was written:

"Ukiah Grant, dealer in Wines and Liquors, North Honan road, purchased one slave, named Wo Sing, in 1885. July 7, 1887, a daughter was born to him by this woman. In 1892, he retired from business and returned to his native city, San Francisco, California, U. S. A. The records show that he paid taxes upon one hundred thousand dollars. Signed by Wu Chow, Recorder of the Quan Yin temple."

A great cloud was lifted from Quong Lung, when he saw the official stamp on the Quan Yin temple, for he knew that this was testimony that no man could dispute. With the document still in his hand, he returned to the Nanking road and told old Wang of his success.

"You may begin now to put both girls in training for a trip to San Francisco. Ah Moy must be taught to say that she is the daughter of Quong Lung and born in the United States, otherwise the devil will be to pay when I try to land her. You know the old story of the custom house. You must also produce a mole on her right cheek. Aside from that, she fits the passport I have very well.

The half-breed I am sure is all right, as I can prove that she is the daughter of a wealthy citizen of that city."

So saying, he dropped another coin in the hand of Wang and went out. There was buoyancy in his step, as he walked briskly toward the Bund. The amount of money that he might extort from Ukiah Grant, when he landed in San Francisco with his half-breed daughter, was as yet an unknown quantity; but he felt sure that it would swell his bank account. He went directly to the office of the Nippon Yusen Cashia and found that it would be a week yet before another steamer sailed. By that time he could easily have everything in readiness for the journey.



XII

IT was early in the fall when Quong Lung led his two slave girls up the gang plank of the *Hong Kong Maru*. Tucked away under his blouse were three European steerage tickets, the transcript of the temple record, for which he had paid three hundred dollars, and two passports, one for himself and one for Ah Moy. He did not think it necessary to have a passport for Wing, since he could prove that she was the daughter of an American citizen.

His own passport recited that he was a merchant doing business on Jackson street, in San Francisco. The passport on which he expected to land Ah Moy stated that she was Chinese, twenty years old, and born in California. It also mentioned the fact that she had a mole on the right cheek. This document was second hand, having been taken out for a death-stricken slave whom Quong Lung had brought with him from San Francisco, but she answered the description reasonably well. That she was Chinese, anyone could see; that she was twenty years of age, happily no one could deny; and that she had a mole on her right cheek was due to old Wang's skilful manipulation. Taking all things together, the slave-dealer congratulated himself on stepping out of the bedlam into which his own country had fallen with a prospect of landing on his feet in San Francisco.

In the European steerage there was scarcely standing room; but Quong Lung pushed his way to the women's cabin, and there deposited the two astonished girls, bidding them stay until he returned and not to talk to anyone.

He then climbed the narrow iron stairs to the middle deck and began searching among the crew for old acquaintances.

He had crossed the ocean twice before in the ship, and as the crew was mostly Chinese he felt sure that they would remember him. Especially would the cook, whose friendship he valued highly. As he stepped under the awning, he saw a number of women standing beside the rail, each of whom had a hymn book in her hand, and a look of doomsday in her face. With his eyes cast deep upon the floor, he attempted to pass this little group, but one of them plucked him by the sleeve and asked him if he "loved Jesus," to which he replied that he did, but his face darkened and he turned back to the second cabin where he waited for an opportunity to pass unobserved. When the proper moment came, he again climbed the stairs in search of his friend the cook, but as he did so another sight ruffled the smooth surface of his brow. A woman with a Salvation Army bonnet drifted past him to meet another bonnet of the same kind. As soon as they had gone, he dived rather unceremoniously into the kitchen and remarked that he had never seen so many missionaries in his life. Sing Ho, the cook, quite agreed with him. "The Boxers have driven them on board, and so much the better for China," replied that important personage.

"Yes," answered Quong Lung. "It is to be hoped that this uprising will rid China of them altogether."

"My, no can chin, chin," replied Sing Hi, and then swore in tolerably good English that China was for the Chinese, and that the foreign devils should stay in their own country. It was now late in the afternoon. The arm of the great steel crane was swinging load after load of baggage into the hold, and the jar of machinery was shaking the ship from fore to aft. Quong Lung cast his eye up and

read with considerable nautical skill the language of the flags as they floated lazily in the breeze. A yellow one said: "We sail from a plague-infested port."

"Poor old China," said he, "is plague-stricken, as well as drouth-stricken. Then looking at the Stars and Stripes, he congratulated himself that he could go to the land of the free and the home of the brave, and remain until times were better. That with a little manipulation of passports, he could even land slaves there. As he stood meditating, the gang plank was suddenly taken up and the sorrowful waving from the shore told him that the hour of departure had come. He slipped back to where he had left the two girls, and found them wedged in between Americans, Hindoos, Sikhs, Russians, and such other conglomerate as go to make up society in an open part of Asia. He was glad that only a few of their traveling companions spoke English, for he shrewdly reckoned that as long as there was a confusion of tongues his slaves were reasonably safe from molestation.

The first three days of the voyage were like the first three days of any other sea voyage, the passengers shivered and at times turned grayish yellow. When the stewardess came round with the regulation questions, those who could smiled, while others demanded beef tea. Quong Lung was too good a sailor to be sea-sick; he loafed and picked dainties from the cook's kettles, and frequently passed the door of the women's cabin, where his girls lay looking very limp and yellow. But by the third day, everything grew rapidly better. First one and then another was able to go on deck; and at last the two Chinese girls crawled out of their bunks, combed their hair, and, under the protection of one of the women, climbed the stairs to get the morning sun. Quong Lung saw them and gritted his teeth.

"By the five-toed dragon," he muttered, "there she is, with a Salvation Army bonnet and a hymn book."

He glanced into the innocent blue eyes of the woman, as though she had done him an injury, and as soon as he could conveniently lay hold of the girls, he took them by the hand and led them to the stairs, saying in no uncertain voice,

"Stay below and keep away from the woman."

This act brought upon him a score or two of eyes and set a score or two of tongues a going.

"I was trying to help the poor girls," complained she of the bonnet, "and the horrid old Chinaman took them away."

"You must not be discouraged in well-doing," said a sweet-faced sister. "It may be many days before bread cast upon the waters returns again."

"But where can he be going with those two girls, and can he be their father, or are they slaves?" were soon topics of discussion among the missionaries. Society finds its own on shipboard as well as elsewhere and it came about naturally that missionaries of all creeds drifted together. Each morning they held a prayer-meeting, after which they indulged in social talk — no better and no worse than that of others. They managed to gather all the available news, to speculate upon it, and to draw conclusions. They knew who favored missionary work and who opposed it, and they scented afar off any who were tainted with unbelief. But the one question they could not decide at all was what Quong Lung was going to do with his two girls in San Francisco.

Thus matters stood one morning, when an elderly man, who was affectionately known as "Brother Jones," led the prayer meeting. Brother Jones had lived long in the Orient and knew the whys and wherefores of the trade in

Chinese girls in San Francisco. As he saw Quong Lung leading his two girls past the hatch, he addressed him in the dialect of the Quong Tung province. It was a surprise to the slave-dealer to find a missionary who spoke his own tongue, so he entered into conversation with him, which ended in an invitation to leave the girls with one of the ladies.

The lady referred to was a Presbyterian missionary, in whose face every line spoke of good. Ah Moy felt it, and placed her defenseless little hand in the proffered one and sat down contentedly by her side. Quong Lung was now so hedged in that he felt it necessary to make an explanation, so he boldly said that Ah Moy was his daughter, born in California, the language of the exclusion act being closely followed.

But it was an unlucky moment when he condescended to explain matters to Brother Jones, for that gentleman had recognized in the face of Quong Lung that unmistakable something which stamps itself upon a Cantonese Chinaman, while in Ah Moy's face he saw as plainly the marks of the northern bred. This discrepancy of testimony at once gave rise to the suspicion that both girls were slaves. Brother Jones communicated this probability to the women, as soon as the Chinaman was beyond hearing, and from that moment the horoscope of the slave-dealer told a troublesome story.

It was useless to try to escape the missionaries; they swarmed about him, expressing the greatest interest in his charges; they led the girls on deck and talked to them in that wonderful sign language which nature provides for all her children. When the weather was fair, the ladies and the Chinese girls leaned together over the rail to watch the water as it was churned into frothy yeast, or they peeped into the engine room, to see the bright machinery,

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each throb of which was bringing them nearer to their destination.

Among those who walked and talked with the girls was Dr. Richardson, who had for three years been stationed as a medical missionary in one of the open ports of China. Her eye was the trained eye of science, and she knew at once that into Wing's veins had been poured a stream of fierce and ungoverned western blood.

"Poor little waif," she said, "cast upon so stormy a sea without sail or rudder; it is to such as these that the true missionary should go."

"Yes, yes," returned she of the motherly heart, "but can you tell us how to help these unfortunates? It is easy to bring Ah Moy to Jesus; but, with the Eurasian, it is a different story."

"Ah Moy," said the doctor, a little sharply, "is no more in need of being brought to Jesus than are the birds. It is Wing that needs our help. By her father's blood she is fairly stamped as one of us, and we owe her our protection. Ah Moy can be sold in San Francisco to some wealthy Chinaman for a wife. But little Wing will be despised, and if left to herself will probably find her way to the class we call 'fallen.' She is only of value to the world," continued the doctor, "as she is protected." Then, putting her arm about the poor little half-breed girl, she said,

"Buddhism has done more to teach her children abstemiousness and sex-wisdom than has Christianity."

"To this remark, the Salvation Army missionary protested, saying that missionaries who could endorse anything in Buddhism were in danger of losing the true light.

"That subject is not under discussion," replied the doctor, "but it is a fact beyond dispute that Chinese

children are better trained in many respects than ours. If our own people understood this subject better, we should not find the half-breed scattered from Dan to Beersheba and left without protection, as this poor child has been." ✓ 306 ✓

Wing felt the magnetism of the doctor's embrace and crept nearer to her with a sheltered feeling, such as she had never before experienced.

"This strange foreign woman," she said to Ah Moy, when they were alone, "understands me, and I love her."

During their long morning prayer-meetings the missionaries managed to keep the slave girls near them. Quong Lung walked the deck uneasily, and to counteract any evil influence provided liberally for the bodily comfort of Ah Moy and Wing.

When he found that the foreign food was distasteful to them, he made raids upon Sing Hi for such food as the Oriental palate craved. These dainties he cooked himself upon a pocket stove and dished out as the girls needed them. Through all his conversation, he was also careful to impress Ah Moy with the idea that California was a country where people lived in the greatest luxury, and that, as soon as they arrived, she would become the wife of a rich merchant.

The water remained a miracle of beauty; blue met blue on the horizon line for days at a time; occasionally, a whale spouted in the distance or an albatross swept the air close to the rail, but save for these little incidents the solitude of an unbroken sea contrasted, day by day, with the restlessness of the passengers on board the great ship. For eighteen days the scene was the same, when, suddenly, an outline of dim green and a long line of white surf crept along the horizon.

Quong Lung's quick eye was the first to see it; he called

the attention of the girls and pointed to a jewel-like row of islands, set in an ever-changing opal sea. For hours they watched the apparition grow into land, studded with groups of palms and sugar cane, while little dots on its slopes told of homes nestling beneath the foliage.

Before night, the ship came to a standstill, just outside the wharf of Honolulu and as no contagious disease had developed during the voyage, the passengers were allowed to land. They found the western civilization fairly established, and everything throbbing with life. A political boss had charge of the work on the wharf, and close by was the "Holiness Hotel" and the "Gladtidings" grocery store.

Quong Lung attempted to go ashore, but was informed that Chinamen were not allowed to land. The missionaries, however, were on their own stamping ground. They were met by an eager throng, escorted ashore, and entertained with fruits and flowers beyond compare. On the third day, they returned to the ship, bearing all the luxuries of a semi-tropical climate. Out of their abundance Ah Moy and Wing were bountifully supplied, at which they marvelled much. That night a white trail was left on the smooth surface of the sea, and in the morning the ship was again out of sight of land.

Only a week now remained until the end of the voyage. Tailor-made clothes came out of the trunks, to adorn the women; Japanese kimono gave place to shirt-waists. The male members of the missionary staff had their queues cut off, and, in deference to Western taste, donned coats and vests. The Japanese on board limped about in leather shoes, and even Quong Lung brought out shining new trousers for his girls.

The ship underwent such a cleaning up as no ship ever receives until she is nearing port. Tattered flags were

mended and masts were painted, floors scrubbed, and brass polished. Through the liberality of the steamship company, hundreds of labels bearing the word "Disinfected" were scattered among the passengers, with the advice "to stick them on to everything." This, both saint and sinner did, and when they arrived in quarantine waters nothing but the yellow flag told that the ship had sailed from an infected port. It was necessary, however, that she halt and wait for the inspectors, a formality which caused delay, and some remarks not complimentary to international usage; but toward night the obnoxious flag came down and the *Hong Kong Maru* slid gracefully up to her pier at the foot of Brennan Street.

Here she was again boarded by officials in blue uniforms, who seemed to be merely loitering about, but who were in reality taking close notice of all on board. These men Quong Lung pointed out to the girls, at the same time handing them the documents upon which he expected to get them ashore, and once again impressing upon them the necessity of saying that they were born in California.

Although of a race whose greatest accomplishment is "to keep the face," Quong Lung showed signs of worry. The ship was now discharging her just and her unjust into the streets of San Francisco; the second cabin steward had gathered the Chinese into a squad and was waiting until the European passengers were off, to marshal them in double quick time to the gang plank.

When the human stream began to thin, Quong Lung turned to the girls and bade them be in readiness. As it was near night, he shrewdly reckoned that the custom house officers would be getting hungry, and perhaps that fact might enhance his chance of getting through without very close scrutiny. The minutes seemed long to him, but at last the steward gave the signal and the Chinese fell into

line, each presenting his passport, and answering such questions as were put to him.

The officers recognized Quong Lung as a merchant whom they had often seen on board and let him pass without even looking at his papers; but when the girls timidly stepped behind him, Brother Jones, who had lingered purposely, whispered something into the officer's ear and he immediately motioned the girls back, and the steward led them to one side.

After the crowd had disappeared, the officers called the girls forward again and demanded their passports. The description in Ah Moy's seemed fairly correct, but suspicion was aroused by the fact that the mole on her cheek was slightly off color. When they asked her where she was born she was too frightened to recall the word "California," which had been so carefully drilled into her memory, and only stood with the stolid look of a Chinese who does not understand. The officer folded her passport and handed it back with a shake of his head, at the same time reaching for the transcript of the Temple records which Wing held.

"Here is another case out of the ordinary," he said after reading the papers, "I do not think we have ever before had a Chinese woman who claimed to be the daughter of an American. It may be all right, but I do not wish to take the responsibility of passing her."

After a short consultation, the officers decided that they could do nothing except keep the girls on board until the next day, and then give them a new hearing. Quong Lung requested the privilege of going back to speak to them; but his request was denied and he walked wrathfully away toward Chinatown.

XIII

CHINATOWN was all agog over Quong Lung's failure to land his slaves. Groups of men discussed the incident and complained at America's discriminations against the Mongolian. When the bell on the old church tower was striking eight, the president of the Ho Wang Company sent out messages to those most interested to meet in a hall on Crocker Alley, and talk the matter over.

The room where the meeting was called was the one in which the Chinese municipal council was wont to assemble. Its furniture consisted of straightback teakwood chairs, elaborately carved, a long table upon which was tea and opium, tobacco and whiskey—even the whiskey of the white devil, which the Chinese had learned to like better than their own *sam-shu*. Against the walls, divans with wooden pillows, attested to the luxurious habits of those gathered there. In an incense-burner, before the God of Prosperity, a hundred joss sticks evinced the religious zeal of the Ho Wang Company. At the far end of the room, was a screen on which was inscribed, in softly shaded ideographs, verses from the Confucian code.

This pious appearing decoration, however, served another purpose than that of teaching morality; for it was hung at the top, with hinges that swung out and concealed an opening in the wall, through which any number of persons might disappear, and, like birds that swim under water, come to the surface a long way from the place where they went down. This arrangement was necessitated by the frequent visits of the police, on which occasions it

was thought better that the hall should be found unoccupied.

At the street entrance was a sentinel, who communicated, by pulling a wire, with another sentinel on the inside,—once for a member of the Ho Wang Company, twice for an unfriendly tong, and three times for any suspicious movement of the policemen, whose eagle eye was frequently turned in that direction.

It was getting late and all was quiet, so the guard on the inside pulled a piece of roast pork from his sleeve and was about to eat, when the bell rang once. He slipped the pork back into place and admitted four men, all of middle age, and prosperous appearance.

The first was Ah King, straight as an arrow, shrewd as a fox, and strong in the faith that Chinatown did not need police surveillance. He wore a green silk blouse, decorated under his queue with a greese spot the size of a dinner plate. Ho Lung followed on the heels of the first merchant and answered to the same description,—a little deeper concentration of thought had turned his eyes a little more toward the nose; a little more taste in the selection of his silken trousers had given him a superior air; but far underlying all surface appearances, was the real Chinaman, who lives forever and changes not. The other two men followed in single file, and the odor of the Far East came in with them and sat with them at the table.

The little party talked about the affairs of the Ho Wang Company, the latest news from home, the prices of vegetables, and then drifted off upon the exclusion act.

“Our friend, Quong Lung, has had a stormy voyage,” remarked Ah King, as he poured tea from a padded teapot.

“Yes,” assented Ho Lung, “The God of Fate has brought him into trouble.”

Just here a third voice piped up, "The signs were not right when he sailed. A man should not go to sea when the sign of the zodiac is in Taurus."

"Oh, I do not concern myself so much about the signs," said Ah King, "living in San Francisco ten years makes a man begin to doubt them; but it cannot be denied that the times were inauspicious when our friend sailed. The trouble with the Boxers drove so many missionaries on board that Quong Lung could not keep aloof, and, as a result, they have brought him into trouble."

"Yes," agreed Ho Lung, "but I still believe that the gods have much to do with our troubles. We all lie bound upon the wheel of fate."

After this remark there was silence for a time, and then conversation turned upon politics — the politics of Chinatown, a brand quite distinct from that of the white men; a wheel within a wheel, so to speak, which goes one way while the main wheel goes another.

They had not entered very fully upon this complicated subject, however, when a party of five young men, all of a slightly modified type, came into the room. These were American born, and had been educated in the public schools. They swore in English, but returned to the mother tongue to express shades of meaning not within the scope of their adopted language. "Pidgin" they rigidly ignored, as they also did the western style of dress. Garments cut to show the outline of the figure were as much an indecency to them as to their fathers.

The young men took seats, and as Quong Lung had not yet arrived, they listened respectfully to the conversation of their elders.

"Business is good," remarked Ah King, "the books of the Company show that, at the New Year's festival, every man had money to burn to his ancestors."

"Yes," said Fo Lung, who kept an employment office, "the demand for labor is greater than the supply. If it were not for the exclusion act, we might do well in this country."

"Ah, yes," said Ah King, "it is too difficult for our people to get here; the United States discriminates against us. The exclusion act, the demand for the 'open door,' and the high tariff — what a trinity of inconsistencies! The duty on pickled eggs is now five cents a dozen, and the duty on dried mushrooms is equally high."

Just then another party of Quong Lung's friends, among whom was the "peace talker," Ah Foon, arrived, and seated themselves at the table. Ah Foon was a lawyer who undertook both sides of his cases. He seemed always to be present where trouble was brewing. Whenever there was a difference of opinion among his countrymen, he threw himself into the breach for the purpose of adjusting it. On occasions of serious rupture, he had been known to prostrate himself, first to one side and then to the other, in the interest of peace. Among Chinamen he seldom failed to make amicable arrangements; but he had learned, after some experience, that Westerners adjust their differences in quite another way, and to their methods he was now giving attention. He had found that testimony was an important item, in settling disputes in the white man's court and he had frequently furnished such as was required to win a case. In short, he had become so skilful in this matter, that he only needed a clear idea of what was wanted, to be able to produce it. Especially had he looked into habeas corpus procedure and felt a considerable degree of confidence that everything in the American man's court, especially when connected with this writ, depended on the evidence.

"What thinkest thou about Quong Lung's getting his

girls ashore?" Ho Lung asked Ah Foon, as the conversation lagged.

"I hope there will be no trouble," he replied, "there are several ways to arrange it. If a good man should be on the wharf in the morning, it will be an easy matter; if not, he must go to the court of the white devil. In these courts it often happens that the wisest cannot hold his own with the most ignorant, but we must meet that state of things."

Ah Kee suspended judgment. He had left the fatherland but a short time before, arriving first in Canada, and thence by slow degrees, to San Francisco.

The next subject that came under discussion was the price of girls.

"Why there is so much trouble about getting our women folk here is a mystery to me," said Ho Lung; "the last wife I bought cost me twelve hundred dollars, and when Quong Lung gets his little beauty ashore, he will probably want as much as two thousand for her. In China one can get all the girls he wants for one or two hundred apiece. It is this outrageous exclusion law that makes it so hard to get wives."

To the surprise of the elderly men a dissenting voice was now heard. Hi Su, one of the young men, arose and said:—

"I respect the ways of my ancestors and I love the fatherland; but I believe it is time for us to learn to obey the laws of our adopted country. I think the buying of slaves to be a sin. I obey the municipal council of Chinatown, so long as it does not come into conflict with the laws of the State,—but further than that I do not go."

"Yes," chimed in Sam Sing, another of the young men, "I also obey the laws of California, and I send my daughters to school, just the same as I do my sons."

↘ These sentiments of the younger men were regarded by their elders as proof that loyalty to the fatherland was fading away, and that the habits of the grimy barbarian were being rooted in their lives. They meditated for a while on what seemed to them the retrogression of their fellows, and then Ho Lung rose to the occasion.

“Can love of home be like the love of a child for a butterfly? Have the ages written their story of soft repose upon the Chinaman’s face only to be wiped out, as foot-steps out of sand by an incoming tide? Does the lifting up of hands to the ancestral shrine mean nothing to us because we are away from home? Young Chinamen who find themselves drifting from the customs of their fathers should bow their heads and pay reverence to the nation that has lived to see all other nations take their places among the dead.”

For some moments after this burst of eloquence, a deep silence pervaded the room, the incense lay in sheets along the wall and no one seemed willing to speak; then Ah Kee arose and recounted some of the customs of the fatherland.

↘ “At home, the old father and mother live in the house and all the sons and all the sons’ wives take care of them. Here parents and grandparents have no place; they are not revered by their daughters-in-law. There women are modest, and do not wear clothes to reveal their figures, while here the women deform their bodies and disqualify themselves for bearing children. There, the man bearing a heavy burden upon his back is given the right of way, while here the rich hold their places on the sidewalk. No, no, it is far better in our own country!”

Silenced by this high morality, the whole party fell to dreaming of home and friends and native land.

The arrival of Quong Lung aroused them and brought

them to a realization of the duties of the hour. Blessed with the marvellous capacity of his race to adjust itself to all the conditions of life, Quong Lung had gone immediately upon arrival to a barber shop and had his head shaven, his queue lengthened, and his trousers pressed. No sign told of the storm that raged within him, no shadow lingered in his black eyes to proclaim his discomfort. The most scrutinizing could only see the pleasure of a man, who after long voyaging had arrived in port.

When the sentinel at the door announced him, each member of the party arose and courteously inquired after his welfare. For some he had messages, for others packages, and for all the kindly greetings of a well-bred man. No attempt was made by him to introduce the subject nearest to his heart, or to arouse sympathy. A delightful evening was spent, and at three o'clock in the morning the guests took their departure.

Ah Foon, the "peace-talker," however, remained. Left to themselves, the two men waived ceremony and began in earnest the business of the night.

"Be seated, noble brother," said Quong Lung, as he drew a chair to the table, "be seated; it is good to feel thee near. All is well with thee, I hope."

"All is well, thanks to Ten Wang," replied Ah Foon.

Thou hast heard of the little episode at the ship, as I attempted to land my slaves?"

"Yes," quoth Ah Foon, "I have heard it with sorrow. The Exclusion Act makes it difficult for us to gather families about us in this land of the free."

Yes, the law of the white man is directed against the Mongolian, returned Quong Lung.

"I fear thou art correct, most noble brother," assented Ah Foon.

"The business in which I am engaged has the sanction

Ch. laws in
of our own people, as thou knowest; but the Western man hampers us and makes it necessary that we meet him as best we can. My attorney advises me that the landing of the girls is now a matter of testimony. The members of the Ho Wang Company are sworn, as thou knowest, to stand together, and give bold counterstrokes to all who persecute them. Here is *sam-shu*, let us drink to the confusion of the white man's laws."

They drank and drank again, and pledged eternal friendship. Then Quong Lung drew a gold piece from his purse and offered it to Ah Foon, saying:—

"Bestow it upon whosoever thou knowest to be in need, that the gods may see that we have no evil in our hearts."

"No, no, the coin I will not accept," said Ah Foon, "but if I can be of service thou knowest I shall be most willing."

"It is to thee that I look for assistance," said Quong Lung.

"Has your attorney, the white devil, informed you what the law requires you to prove?" questioned Ah Foon, as he proceeded to light more joss sticks.

White lawyers
"Yes," replied Quong Lung, "we must conform to the language of the Exclusion Act, which requires us to prove that Ah Moy was born in the United States. My astute counsel says there will be no trouble about landing the half-breed."

"And what is the price thou wouldst pay for this testimony?"

"Such as is commensurate with the exigencies of the case. Is it sufficient if I return to thee the note that I hold for one hundred dollars?"

"The note I would fain pay in coin," said Ah Foon.

"Then you must name your price, and not be too hard on a man who is in trouble," said Quong Lung.

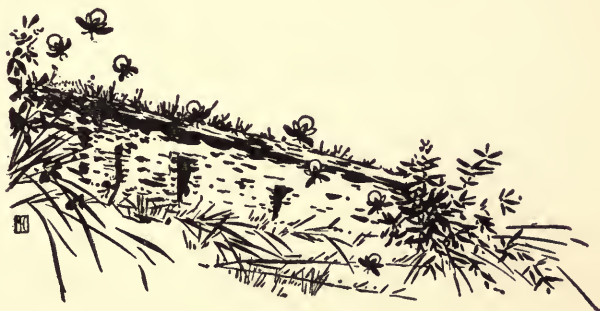
"It is a serious business, and I would not mention less than two hundred dollars," answered the peace-talker.

"What thou wilt do, thou wilt do," and they filled their pipes and drank again to the confusion of the white man's laws.

It was near daybreak when they left the building with a mutual understanding to meet at the wharf at nine o'clock.

At the mission house on Jackson street, there was also night work on hand. Upon leaving the ship, Brother Jones had gone straight to this place and informed the inmates of the situation at the wharf. He believed the girls to be slaves, and, with a well intentioned aggressiveness, he called upon his co-workers to rescue them. As soon as he described Quong Lung, they all understood that they had a foe worthy of their steel. Many an encounter had they had with him, and many a time had he slipped through the meshes of the law. Although it was long past office hours, they sent for their attorney and made such preparations as they could to rescue the girls.

Brother Jones accepted the hospitality of the house for the night, and as the clock in the old tower was striking two, his light flickered out.



XIV

NOT until the passengers had all left the ship did the girls begin to realize their situation. For a time they looked, wonder-eyed, into the desolation about them, and then they went back to the second cabin, where they had spent the twenty-seven days of the voyage. Even the packages that had filled all the available space would now have been a welcome sight, but, one by one, they had all been carried away until the only familiar object was the pile of Chinese coffins just opposite the port-hole.

"I wish we were shut up in one of them," said Ah Moy, "then we would be sure of getting back to lie with our ancestors in the family burial-ground."

"Oh, dear no! That would be dreadful," exclaimed Wing. They talked for a little while, and then too much alarmed for serious thought, they sat down in gloomy silence until the steward brought them supper. He laughed and joked about Quong Lung's mishap, as if it were an everyday occurrence for two unhappy girls to be left alone on a great ship.

"Come and take a walk on deck," he said, when they refuse the food he brought. But they shook their heads, and very soon went frightened to bed.

The morning dawned, cold and windy, and the fog-horn bellowed its warnings to the children of the sea.

On an old pile, just beyond the end of the wharf, sat a large sea-gull, which the girls thought to be a bird of evil omen.

"We shall be thrown overboard," said Wing, "My

mother always said that when a bird sits still and utters its solemn croak, it means that someone is surely going to die."

"But that is better than to live and suffer disgrace," interjected Ah Moy.

The crew staggered back, somewhat the worse for having spent a night on shore, and everything on the ship showed signs of disorder. A few Chinamen came early to the wharf to select boxes and bundles, but always went back before the girls could get a word with them.

"What shall we do," said Wing, "if no one comes for us?"

"Alas, I cannot answer," returned Ah Moy.

Before them was a bowl of rice that had been left by the steward, and opposite to it there was a paper joss which one of their countrymen, in the exuberance of his joy, had forgotten. Ah Moy set the rice before the sacred emblem, as though it might, in some mysterious way, appease the wrath of an angry god.

Not until it was ten o'clock did a shaft of sunlight flash through the port-hole and tell the girls that the fog had cleared and the day was beautiful. Just then, a Chinese servant came in to gather up the sheets and pillow cases, and Wing mustered up courage to say:—

"Tell me, oh, tell me, what those people will do with us!"

"I do not know," he answered kindly, "I think Quong Lung will come pretty soon."

Before he had finished speaking, there was a clatter of footsteps on the stairs and a party of women came down. They expressed great pleasure at finding the girls, and sat down and chatted so pleasantly that the slaves felt sure something was to be done in their behalf. This hope lightened their fears, and they smiled as the ladies

made reference to them. Soon, another figure, which they both rejoiced to see, came down the stairs. It was no other than Dr. Richardson. Wing sprang into her arms nestling her head upon her bosom, and the doctor looked down upon her as a mother looks upon her own.

"This is the half-breed girl of whom you have heard," she explained to her associates.

"Yes, doctor," said Miss Stevens, who was matron of the missionary home, "I see you have been at work on your voyage, and I am inclined to yield the palm to you."

"Well," said the doctor, "I see the angel that is imprisoned in this block of stone, and I would be the instrument in the hands of God for liberating it."

"But we who have been longest in the work, and can read the symptoms, are rather doubtful," replied Miss Stevens.

"We make sad mistakes about symptoms," said the doctor. "The uneasy longings of the Eurasian, as a class, may as well be symptoms of genius, or of mighty love, as symptoms of evil. I fear the idea of our own superiority is a thin romance upon which we have fed until it has warped our judgment."

This sharp repartee was an offense to Miss Stevens, who replied:—

"I prefer your prescriptions, doctor, to your religious opinions."

But she turned, and, looking squarely into the doctor's face, asked:—

"What can you do for the girl?"

"Why," explained the doctor, "first save her from Quong Lung, and then save her from herself. The half-breed has the vices of both parents, I will admit, but they're curable."

"As a class they are hard to manage," said the matron, still doubtfully, "we have them occasionally at the home, and they are apt to make trouble; the other girl is easily saved."

"The other one is already saved," responded the doctor, rather tartly; "she has behind her ages upon ages of virtuous ancestors, and she does not need any help from us." ✓

At this moment the steward came and requested them all to go on deck and meet the inspectors. The whole party arose and tripped lightly up the stairs, followed by the doctor, who still held Wing fast by the hand. As they walked toward the gang-plank, they saw a number of officials in close conversation with Brother Jones, while a little apart stood Quong Lung and the peace-talker, Ah Foon. A Chinese interpreter instructed the girls to hand over their passports to the inspector; this they understood, and without hesitation obeyed. He was a kindly, well-fed man, this official, and he smiled upon the girls as they timidly presented their papers.

"The law works cruelty upon such as these," he said, at the same time unfolding the transcript of the Kwan Yin record. He read the document carefully, and, with a perplexed look, handed it to his brother inspector.

"It is certainly unusual. I do not remember to have seen anything like it. It may be all right, but I should not be willing to let her go ashore without consulting someone higher in authority than myself."

"Yes," agreed the first inspector, "Quong Lung is a shrewd fellow, and we might be misled by some of his tricks."

They then unfolded Ah Moy's passport.

"This one is all right," said the first inspector, "I remember that when Quong Lung went to China, he took a

young woman with him and this is probably her return passport."

"It may be all right, but I think we ought to be very careful. We have made a number of mistakes in these matters, and I do not like to take the responsibility."

Then, turning to Ah Moy, he asked:—

"Can you remember where you were born, little one?"

Ah Moy made no reply, but Quong Lung and his friend, Ah Foon, threw themselves into the breach and declared that she was born in California. Here Brother Jones interrupted

"It cannot be. I have seen too many Chinese to believe a word of it."

Thus the two forces met and clashed, and the inspectors, not knowing what to do, very wisely decided to do nothing.

At this juncture Dr. Richardson volunteered to look for Wing's father and promised if she found him to report to the main office on Washington street. This was a little light upon a dark subject, and finally the inspectors gave both girls into her charge.

It was now near noon, and as there seemed to be no way out of the dilemma, the doctor decided to take her charges to the mission home. The inspectors accompanied the little party to the street and placed them all in a carriage.

As they were rapidly whirled away, Ah Moy saw Quong Lung and Ah Foon standing in close conversation at the foot of the wharf. In her simple little heart she thought that Ah Foon was the rich merchant who was waiting to make her his wife. She saw, in the one short moment as they passed him, that his clothing was of heavy silk and his stockings were spotlessly white, and she remembered the pang she had felt when she saw Ting Ho march past her father's gate, to be no more seen forever. She remembered, too, the story of the great dragon who carries

off little girls, and she wondered if she were not, even now, going to the cave of the infant ghosts to build sand towers to be blown away by the wind.

But although great waves of sorrow swept through her heart, she sat motionless, waiting to obey any voice which should point out a path through the darkness that surrounded her, while, in sharp contrast, sat Wing weeping and clinging to Dr. Richardson.

It was but a few moments' drive to the Home, and before they had time to understand what was going on, the heavy doors of the mission closed upon them. Although the ladies were very kind, they took the girls to a secure room, beyond danger of ingress or egress, for they had learned by experience to allow no opportunity for escape.

An assistant helped the girls to wash and readjust their clothing, but she spoke only Cantonese and no conversation could be entered upon. She treated them kindly, however, and, when they were ready, led them to a large room where there were many Chinese girls. Not one of these spoke the language of the Honan province, but the kindness in their manner and the happy look in their faces allayed the fears of the slaves, and they soon began to look about the building.

The wonderful conveniences of water and of gas, the large rooms, the strange furnishings and the spring beds, appeared to them marvels of luxury. The piano, so much larger than any musical instrument they had ever seen before, astonished them, and when a class of girls lifted up their voices and sang, they laughed quite merrily.

After an hour or so in the parlor, they arose and signified to one of the girls that they would like to return to their room, so, after bowing gracefully three times, they withdrew. When they were alone, Ah Moy said to Wing:—

"How it all happens, I cannot tell, but these are the very same kind of people that my father used to point out to me when we rode past the mission on the Yang-tse-Kiang river, and he liked them not."

"But," said Wing, "they are kind, and my doctor is good. I wonder if they are all like her?"

"My father used to say that the missionaries are all alike," Ah Moy answered rather dubiously.

All day the girls tried to lift the veil which had so mysteriously fallen across their way. They talked of Quong Lung and his friend, of the long sea voyage, and the fruit and flowers of Hawaii, and as the moon came out and the roar of the great city began to hush, Ah Moy seemed to hear the bells of the old Tien Dong, calling the saints to prayer. In her uncomplaining grief she loosened her long black hair, and with soft proud eyes, turned her face to the east.

No thought had she of blaming anyone for the sorrow that had come upon her; no thought had she of asking God to lighten her burden. To face a sea of troubles, and to act rightly her part, in the complex relation she bore to it, and, if all failed, to use the knife, was the consummation of her Oriental training. A vague swarm of spirits called to her out of the past, counseling her to acquit herself so as to honor her family name.

Thus the night and another day wore away, and early the following morning a Chinese maid came to the door and offered to assist them to dress, for it was now Sunday, and all must be prepared for the morning service. They did not understand very clearly what was wanted, but the maid succeeded in dressing them neatly and in taking them down in time for breakfast.

Miss Stevens knew how to assuage grief in human hearts, and she allowed the girls to assist in the work,

especially in the arrangement of the flowers. Before eleven o'clock there came a number of Chinamen, with hymn books in their hands, who gathered around the piano to practise the hymns that were to be used in the service, and to assist in arranging the chairs and other details. The leader of the choir was a very pretty young lady, who chatted with the singers and seemed very fond of them. The deadly discords they made and the Cantonese they jabbered between the hymns, only elicited from her a laugh, or a command to try it again. No objection was made to joss sticks, or Buddhas, printed upon silk handkerchiefs.

Precisely at eleven o'clock Brother Jones opened the service with prayer. After thanking the Heavenly Father for their safe arrival and for all the blessings of life, he alluded to the great struggle going on in China and gave many words of praise to the misionaries in that country. Then he closed his prayer by asking the gentle Jesus to visit his wrath upon the slave-dealer. A dangerous sense of humor came twinkling into the eyes of the Chinamen; but they suppressed it, and kept a respectful bearing toward their visitor.

After the sermon Miss Stevens very adroitly cut short any discussion by inviting everyone into the dining room to partake of a cup of tea.

"The work here has taught me," she said to a friend, "that it is hopeless to argue."

"Yes," replied the lady, who had herself been in the service, "Chinamen cannot conceive of Jesus as a God of vengeance."

Poor Brother Jones! His illusions about retribution clung to him like garments long worn. With a mind biting at every creed except his own, the Chinese seemed to him like so many insects, and he winced under the com-

promises that he saw more liberal minded missionaries making.

The two girls sat through the to them strange service without evincing a shadow of surprise. It was Ah Moy's idea of a well-bred girl to "keep the face," and Wing followed her example with exceeding cunning. Although they felt that they were objects of comment, they managed to appear very much at ease.

A number of women called during the afternoon and asked to see the girls, and one richly attired lady offered to adopt them. But Miss Stevens informed her that, for the present at least, they had no jurisdiction over them.

"They are slaves," she said, "and sometimes we are obliged to leave these matters to the courts."

"But is there no way to compel the courts?" asked the lady.

"No," answered Miss Stevens, "unfortunately, the courts can compel us."

So passed Sunday.

Monday and Tuesday brought a round of work, in which the girls joined, and before the end of the week they were becoming accustomed to their surroundings.

The pale faces and blue eyes had no more terrors for them, and although they could not understand all that went on about them, confidence was growing, and the fact that they were occupied with useful duties began to make them feel at home. When they were entrusted with dainty work, their nimble fingers never tired until it was finished and a smile of approbation was received.

But another day brought a surprise for all. Not only the girls, but all the missionaries, were thrown into the greatest possible excitement by the arrival of Dr. Richardson, who came to inform them that the father of Wing had recently died and left a large fortune. It was al-

most beyond belief when the doctor intimated that, in all probability, Wing was more than a millionaire, "for," she said, "Ukiah Grant lost his wife some years before his own death, and there are no children except Wing to inherit."

When Wing saw the doctor, she flew into her arms, although she was not able to comprehend the news. Miss Stevens, however, grasped the situation at once.

"The most practical thing you can do now," she said, "is to apply to the court for letters of guardianship, and if successful, try your theories upon your protégé. But," she added, "that would interfere with your work in China."

"My work in China is finished," answered the doctor, "I have seen enough to convince me that my duty is to my own people. I hear the call of the Aryan race, and it is a call of distress. I hear it, and I should be less than a patriot if I did not respond. If our young men could be taught conscientious regard for their offspring, whether it be legitimate or illegitimate, we should not see our national vices transplanted upon the shores of Asia to fester there until our noble West becomes a byword among the people. Abstemiousness and control over the appetites is what our people need to learn."

"Let us pray for your success," said Miss Stevens, "there is work enough to do right here in San Francisco. But you know the difficulties, do you not?"

"Yes, I know there are difficulties. But I see beyond them. If my services are of any value to mankind, it must be along the line of teaching young people the meaning of that great symbol, the serpent,* as it is taught to the children of Asia."

* Sex wisdom.

Again Miss Stevens said, doubtingly, "Let us pray for success. But what is your plan about Wing?"

"Just what you outlined," replied the doctor, "I intend to apply to the courts for letters of guardianship, and, if successful, to educate her as a medical missionary. It is the noblest of work, and it would be poetic justice, would it not, to see the abandoned child of lust turn upon the vice that is gnawing at her throat and help to stamp it out."

"Good has come out of Nazareth," said Miss Stevens; "perhaps it will again."

Dr. Richardson had now fully determined on her course. She took her departure, but next morning was early at the home with a new suit of clothes, and the never-to-be-forgotten umbrella of the Chinese woman. As soon as Wing was suitably dressed, she took her to the Probate Court and had her name entered as the daughter of Ukiah Grant.

There was much surprise and protest by those who claimed to be heirs of the deceased; but Quong Lung had done his work too well to admit of a doubt. The transcript, signed, sealed and delivered by Woo Chow, in his official capacity as recorder of Kwan Yin temple, was easily verified by the Chinese minister plenipotentiary and the judge, who was glad enough to see a way out of the wrangle, that distant relatives had begun over the estate, recognized Wing as the daughter of the dead millionaire.



XV

AH MOY now settled down to her new life, and was helping the girls with the sweeping and dusting, while a few words of English were creeping into her vocabulary. Miss Stevens had almost concluded that Quong Lung had given up the fight, when one morning, just as she was marshalling the week's work into order, the bell was rung by a pompous-looking official.

Out of his side pocket projected a package of legal documents, which he instinctively grasped as the door was opened by a demure little Chinese girl.

"Can I see the person in authority here?" he asked, at the same time setting one foot firmly over the threshold.

"Do you mean Miss Wilkins, or the matron?" timidly asked the girl.

"I mean the person in authority," replied the official in such a tone that Sin Soy's almond-shaped eyes instinctively turned toward her nose.

"Then you may be seated, sir, and I will look for the matron."

The official took the chair nearest the door, and Sin Soy fled through the hall toward the part of the house where she thought Miss Stevens most likely to be found.

"He looks like a policeman," she cried as she rushed into the dining-room; "he looks like a policeman and he wants to see you."

Miss Stevens threw off the long white apron she was wearing, ran one hand hurriedly over her hair, and pro-

ceeded to the hall. She was not altogether surprised when her visitor served her with an order of court.

"Have you in charge a Chinese girl, lately arrived, whom they call Ah Moy?" he asked.

"I have," replied the matron, slightly flushing. At this the officer handed her a copy of a writ of habeas corpus and said:—

"Then you must bring her into court that the judge may decide to whom she shall be given. She is claimed by Quong Lung as his daughter, is she not?"

"I presume she is," replied Miss Stevens, "but is there no escape from this proceeding? My duties are pressing and the uncertainty of justice makes it —"

"These are questions for the court to decide," interrupted the officer, "the order is mandatory, and must be obeyed."

Saying this, he tipped his hat and descended the steps into the street.

As soon as he was gone, Miss Stevens gathered her little band of assistants together and after a short conference they decided that there was no way to escape the ordeal of going into court.

"We must trust the good Father," said Miss Wilkins.

"And our lawyer," dryly remarked Miss Jones.

"If we could only send her away," lamented Miss Stevens, "we have so many friends in Los Angeles who would have taken her; but we should have done it sooner. Now that the papers are served, I fear it is too late."

Miss Jordan, another missionary, now suggested that they send for Brother Jones.

"None of us have any testimony to give in the case," she said, "at least no such testimony as the court requires. To be sure, we know but to make the court know how we know is quite another thing."

In the midst of the discussion, Brother Jones came in. He had heard of the trouble and knew that he should be an important witness. But when he thought the matter over seriously, he saw that he could only swear that Quong Lung looked Cantonese, while Ah Moy looked every inch northern born. Some of the missionaries believed in the "blessed lie," but now that the time was ripe to put this into practice, it seemed very difficult to do, for Quong Lung's attorney had the reputation of being the very best in the city, and they knew he would pour such a flood of questions upon the witnesses in cross-examination that the truth would be their only protection.

The fact that they could not speak understandingly with Ah Moy made the situation still more difficult, and, taking it, all in all there seemed to be no silver lining to the cloud.

The case was set for hearing the following morning at ten o'clock, and Miss Stevens prepared to be at the courthouse in time.

A Chinese inmate of the home arranged Ah Moy's hair and dress in a way suitable for the occasion and other inmates loaned such articles of adornment as are dear to the heart of girlhood. Ah Moy submitted with calm reserve, but in her heart was deep sorrow lest she should never again see Quong Lung and the rich merchant whom she felt sure was waiting to make her his wife. All the distance between China and San Francisco was not so fatal to her happiness as the one wall between the mission home and Chinatown.

The missionaries understood what was, in the heart of their charge and so took a closed carriage, guarding her on both sides, as they rattled over the cobblestone streets to the great building where law — and sometimes justice — is administered. The judge was disposing of another

case when Miss Stevens and Miss Wilkins, one on either side of the Chinese girl, entered. The marshal saw them and conducted them to seats inside the rail.

Very soon Quong Lung and his friend, Ah Foon, entered the room and were about to take seats near the missionaries; but the marshal motioned the Chinamen back, and they were obliged to remain at a respectful distance. The court room was filled with a throng, made up of all sorts and conditions of men, but to all appearances, the stately judge was oblivious to everything except the doings of a little circle of lawyers before him, who were reviewing the testimony in a murder case which had just been tried. An attorney, whom his brethren at the bar affectionately addressed as "General," called the attention of the court to the perverseness of the witnesses for the prosecution, and, according to his version, all who had testified against his client had done so from pure malice.

The case lumbered along for an hour, when, suddenly, there was a shuffling of feet, a movement of the crowd toward the door, and the case of Quong Lung *vs.* The Occidental Board of Missionaries, was called. Both attorneys were ready and Quong Lung, being the first witness, took the stand.

"He testified clearly and pointedly that Ah Moy was his daughter, twenty years old, and born in California. Upon cross-examination, he kept his story straight, and told it convincingly.

"I came to California in 1872," he said, in response to the inquiry of the attorney for the missionaries.

"How many wives did you bring with you?" asked the lawyer with the air of a man who has caught the witness in a lie.

"Three wives — all the time large family — all the time plenty of trouble with the missionaries."

"That's all," replied the lawyer, "we do not want to hear anything about your troubles."

Then Ah Foon was sworn and testified that he had known Ah Moy from babyhood, and that she was the daughter of Quong Lung, born in California, and twenty years old.

A look of satisfaction beamed on the face of Quong Lung's attorney, as he turned the witness over to Mr. Brown for cross-examination, for he knew by long experience how hopeless would be any attempt of the defendant to go very far into the family life of Quong Lung.

"No questions," said the lawyer, seeing how difficult his case was getting. At this, with a business-like air, the attorney for the plaintiff handed the judge what purported to be the passport of Ah Moy. The judge read the paper over very carefully and said, "It seems to be in conformity with the law. Let us hear the witnesses for the defense."

Brother Jones now stepped forward, but something in his manner seemed to be asking for lenity. He swore that he was a passenger on the "Hong Kong Maru," and that he had only known Ah Moy for the short period of twenty-seven days. He thought she was a slave, because she appeared to be northern bred, while, according to his judgment, Quong Lung was Cantonese.

"It was common talk on the ship that Quong Lung was a slave-dealer," he said.

"Objected to," said the attorney for Quong Lung, "as incompetent, immaterial and irrelevant."

"Objection sustained," ruled the judge; "tell what you know of your own personal knowledge."

Then Brother Jones had to admit that of his own personal knowledge, he knew nothing. Neither could Miss Stevens or Miss Wilkins say anything to help the case.

They requested that Ah Moy be put on the stand to testify through an interpreter; but the judge objected on the ground of her having no knowledge of the solemnity of an oath. And after a little further inquiry he took her to his chambers and there tried to elicit something from her to guide him in his decision. Owing to the fact, however, that his conscience had been reduced, by a purely legal process, to a tacit desire to fulfill the letter of the law, nothing but such considerations came to his mind.

As far as anything could be wrung from Ah Moy, the facts were just as Quong Lung had declared them to be. The sight of the foreigners did not frighten her, as it had done at first, and she could now remember the words, "born in California." These she repeated, parrot-like, and then became a perfect blank. No smile or frown could wring from her another word. The repose of her bearing and her persistent refusal to talk, confirmed the judge in his opinion that everything was as it should be, and he decided to let her go with whomsoever she pleased.

"I see nothing in the case to warrant suspicion," he said.

But the missionaries, the people standing about the room, and even the janitor, knew that another slave-girl had been added to those already in Chinatown.



XVI

AS soon as the judge had rendered his decision, Quong Lung made a bold advance towards Ah Moy, and Ah Foon followed him.

"Come to me," said Quong Lung, with determination in his voice, and Ah Moy made not the slightest attempt to disobey. He took her hand and led her out of the court room, while Ah Foon took his place as rear-guard.

"It is uncertain business," said Quong Long, when they were safely outside the door.

"Yes," asserted Ah Foon, "but what they will do — they will do — these fierce Americans. To run the gauntlet of the court and succeed, is surely better than to run and lose."

Quong Lung smiled a sickly smile. The iron that entered his soul was the loss of money that he had sustained, first in Wing's escape, and second, in the heavy fees that he knew would be wrung from him by his lawyer. He made the best of the situation, however, and when a hackman approached and asked if he desired a carriage, he replied by lifting Ah Moy upon the back seat, while he as unceremoniously flung himself on the seat facing her. When he had instructed the driver where to go, he lowered the curtains and sat sullenly until they reached Chinatown.

There he dismissed the hackman, and led Ah Moy through a narrow street and up a flight of stairs to a room known as the old "slave-hall." A Chinese woman received her and took her to a smaller room, where on

wooden boxes, were arranged all the paraphernalia of female adornment, and immediately she began rearranging her hair and dress. She was not cross, this old woman, as Ah Moy remembered Wang to have been; but she knew her business, and did it in a most unceremonious manner. Very soon, Ah Moy looked her best, according to the Oriental idea, and she was then led back to the hall.

It was not long before Quong Lung returned, accompanied by a number of Chinamen, who were anxious to purchase wives. Ah Moy suited the most fastidious of them; but her owner held her at a very high price. For this reason, several days passed, and no sale was effected.

Meanwhile the newspapers were exploiting some of the facts about the case and the judge's decision, and this aroused the fears of Quong Lung that other legal procedure might be instituted. He therefore removed Ah Moy to another house in Chinatown — a place which sees — but tells no tales. Through dark passages and dingy halls, he led the poor girl to an upstairs room, no larger than a cell, and there locked the door upon her.

Through the iron bars she could see other rooms like her own, all opening into a hallway, which was lighted only by windows overhead. In each of these rooms were young women, with painted faces and embroidered clothing; but as Ah Moy heard them speaking only Cantonese, she could not enter into conversation. From below, throbbing up through the floor, came the squeaky tones of a *sam sin*, the rattle of dice, and the odor of opium smoke.

Intuition, which teaches the young and the pure, told Ah Moy that she was now in a dangerous place. She looked about to see if, perchance, she might find a way of escape, but no passage was visible in any direction. As she sat, undecided what to do, she heard a voice in one of the cells near her, crooning a child's song that she had

often heard at home. Although she could not see the person who was singing, she spoke and asked if there were no way by which she might leave the place.

"No, ah, no," was the sad reply. "We are the slaves of Quong Lung, and the only possible way of getting help is to find someone who will carry a message to the missionaries. But this is hard to do, for no one comes here unless he is sworn to secrecy."

"Oh," said Ah Moy, "how dreadful! I have just come from the missionaries, and now how glad I should be to go back to them."

"They are kind people and would help us if they could," answered the voice, "but I have tried many times to get a message to them but have never succeeded."

This was discouraging news to little Ah Moy. She sat down almost in despair and thought over the situation. She drew from her sleeve the knife that her father had given her, and fondled it almost as though it were a living thing. Until far into the night she waited uncomplainingly, and then, overcome by fatigue and anxiety, she lay down upon the bed and dropped into a troubled sleep. At daybreak, she was again listening for the footsteps of Quong Lung, whom she hoped would come and bring her some sort of relief. It was nearly noon when she heard the key grate in her door and he entered, bringing food and some articles of adornment, which he commanded her to wear. He then left her without a word, and she sat down alone to her scanty meal.

When she had eaten, she combed her long black hair, and again waited calmly to see what the gods might have in store for her. Toward night the outer door was suddenly thrown open and a crowd of men pushed in, scrambling for standing room before the cells of the prettiest girls. Many of their visitors were stupid with

opium, and insolent in their language. Often did Ah Moy feel the blood tingle in her veins and the fire flash in her eyes. One young Chinaman stopped before a cell near her and remarked upon the beauty of its occupant and the fineness of the jewelry she wore. Jests about feet and eyebrows brought laughter from some, when suddenly a bold hand pointed to Ah Moy and its owner said:

"This one has only been over a short time; they say, she is of noble birth."

"Ah, ha," said another, "then she is the little girl that Quong Lung has had so much trouble about."

"Yes," quoth his companion, "she is still grieving for her parents, and it adds much to her beauty."

Ah Moy heard and was now fully conscious of her position.

She felt that at any moment some one of that lustful throng might present himself within her door and claim her trembling body. She fled to the farthest corner of her cell and, like a bird caught in a trap, turned her face to the wall. The bell in the old church tower was striking twelve when she heard the door behind her open, and, looking around, she saw a portly Chinaman. He bore wine and sweets and with honeyed words tried to persuade her to eat. Ah Moy was now too desperate to hear. There was roaring in her ears, and darkness in her eyes, and she could remember nothing but the story of the old Dragon who devours young girls. She clutched at the wall in an effort to escape, but when she felt the man's hand upon her, she turned upon him with the fury of a wildcat and struck him with the knife, inflicting such a gash on his face that he staggered through the door and disappeared.

It was now near morning. The fog fell in cold, damp sheets through the grating of her cell. The hall was

deserted, save for a few opium-eaters who slumbered in a corner, and the only noise on the street was the rattle of early wagons. In grief, Ah Moy threw herself upon the bed and tried to gather her distracted thoughts into something like order. She prayed to the god of her fathers, and she droned a chant that the priests had taught her many years before. This, however, was the crucial test which brought her into a new state of consciousness. When she arose, a spiritual illumination shone in her face and shimmered like a halo about her body. In her heart there was no more fear, for she was able to trust herself entirely to the gods. In imagination she heard the gentle voices of her ancestors counselling her to be brave and fear not. She remembered a little poem, written by Hau Hsi two hundred years before Christ, and repeated it to herself.

“Forth from the Eastern gate my steed I drive,
And, lo, a cemetery meets my view.
Aspens around in wild luxuriance thrive,
The path is fringed with fir, and pine, and yew.

“How fast the lights and shadows change to gray,
How like a summer’s day my life has fled;
How a frail life is snuffed away,
To sleep in silence with its confined dead.”

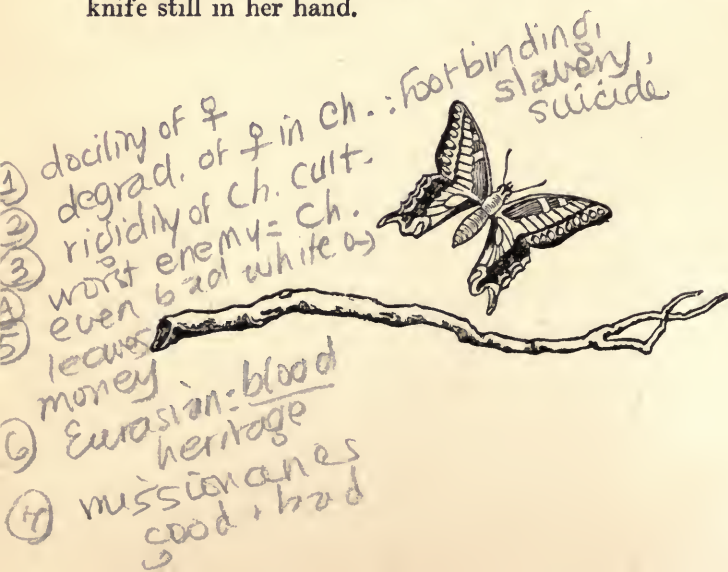
More than ever the ivory-handled knife seemed a connecting link between herself and her parents. Her father had treasured it and had put it into her hand as a sacred gift, and now strangely, oh, so strangely, it had come to be the only thing she had with which to cut herself loose from the intricate web of a distracted life.

One loving little letter she scribbled to her father, tell-

ing him that she was going like the daughter of a nobleman to join the army of her ancestors, "and father dear," she wrote, "the gods have been good to me, for I have escaped the worst of all evils—that of disgracing my parents." Then in noble self-forgetfulness, she added: "And father, you must think better of the missionaries; they tried to take care of me, but I could not understand."

The soul of the Far East was in every word. That splendid scorn of death, which is the result of training, reaching far back into the remotest night of forgotten time, made her brave and lifted her out of the dark waters that threatened to engulf her. To her the Oriental suicide was now a duty and a sacrament. She knew that the highest honor ever paid to women in her beloved Cathay was paid to those who successfully protected themselves from dishonor. She folded the sheet of white paper that lay upon her table into the form of a lotus flower, and then, with steady precision, made a gash in her throat from which the blood leaped in throbbing jets.

At ten o'clock they found her body cold and stiff. The letter to her father folded neatly on the table, and the knife still in her hand.



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